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BROTHER FABIAN'S MANUSCRIPT;

AND OTHER POEMS.

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BY

SEBASTIAN EVANS.

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BROTHER FABIAN'S MANUSCRIPT.

Suscipe corde bono garlandam quam tibi dono.
Tollet languores diligatis si modo flores.

HOW THE ABBEY OF SAINT WEREWULF JUXTA SLINGSBY CAME BY BROTHER FABIAN'S MANUSCRIPT.

Scene—Saint Werewulf's Cloisters. A.D. 1497. *Time*—Afternoon.

PRIOR HUGO *speaks.*

You know Saint Wigbald's,—yonder nunnery cell
Out there, due South, some fourteen furlongs hence?—
Well, five years since,—five?—six, come Michaelmas,
While old Dame Chesslyn, bless her pious soul,
Still Prioress, tended that good Saint's ewe-lambs,
This tome you speak of, then itself a nun,
Fruitlessly holy, waxing year by year
Yellow and yellower in virginity,

Graced the refectory lettern. Truth to tell,
Of all the sisters, six besides the dame,
Was only Margery who could read at all.
Now, John the Archbishop, (some four years it was
Since Bourchier peradventure went to Heaver,
And John, translated to the archbishopric
From Ely, himself as slippery as an eel,
Wriggled right busily in the Church's mud,)
Just then, to clinch his pastoral on the wear
Of broidered girdles, silken liripoops,
Swords, daggers and such vanities, thought meet
To swinge Saint Werewulf's with a special charge,
A rasping monitory, five skins long;
Four and nine-tenths a schedule of our sins
Item on item, bearing each the name
Of some delinquent brother fairly engrossed,
And, these recited, stinglike in the tail,
Came threats of visitation, Heaven knows what,
All ills on this side Purgatory and Hell,
Unless we all in three-score days exact

Abjured the nether trinity, world, flesh, fiend,
And donned the radiant nimbus of the Saints.

Straight, Blaize, our Abbot, red with saintly wrath,
Summons us all to meet him; reads the charge,
And bids us all digest it; storms and fumes,
Dubs us all liars, hypocrites, and fools;—
Swears he foretold the issue. There was one,
A lurching, lean-lipped, lollardizing loon,
Whom we all hated: "Brother Joce," quoth Blaize,
"Some blatant lollard slanderer of the faith
"No doubt hath played the spy on us, and blabbed.
"My lord Archbishop sneaps us for our sloth;
"'T is time I startled some of ye! Suppose
"I take and roast you for a heretic?
"Pitch you like Prophet Jonas to the whale,
"And still the storm you have raised about our ears
"Take rede, Sir Lollard!" So he frowned and left,
And hastened to Saint Wigbald's through the fields.
"Gramercy, Abbot," quoth the Dame, "what ails?

"Gout? No, it can't be gout, you have walked too quick.
"Anything wrong at Malton with the Grange?
"Or Ralph among the deer again? What,—no?
"Well, then 'tis Joce!—I'll swear an oath 'tis Joce!"
"Peace, wench!" says he, "his grace of Canterbury
"Has heard your doings at Saint Wigbald's here,
"And swears to scourge ye with a whip of steel!
"What! Is your house in order? I must see
"And make report!"—Lord, how the poor soul cried
And cursed the lollards!
What, you marvel how
I know she cursed them? Thus;—I heard her curse.—
You see, the Abbot walked across the fields;—
I, skirting by the fence along the lane.
I knew of course that, like the holy oil
On Aaron's head, which trickled to his beard,
And thence dropped fatness on his garment's hem,
The precious balm with which the Archbishop broke
Dan Blaize's pate would fall irriguous down
And reach Saint Wigbald's first unless I sped;

So, lest the sweet inunction, oozing forth,
Should chance to anoint the sisters unawares,
I thought I'd just let Margery hear the news,
And——

Well, in short, Blaize tramped Saint Wigbald's through,
Chapel and chamber, cellar, dortour, all;
The Dame behind him: not a kinder soul
E'er lived than Dame Aylse Chesslyn. As they passed
Through the refectory to the strangers' hall,
Blaize caught a glimpse of something on the desk;
And knowing how bare Saint Werewulf's was of books,
Stept up to inspect the volume: "Ha, what's this?—
"H'm,—sermons,—Fabian,—'tis a clerkly hand;—
"You don't much use them, mother!" Here he wiped
The dust from thumb and finger on her hood.
"We are short of books up there. Suppose we say
"I take the book and send you a brace of trout
"On Fridays every year the season through?
"Come, is't a bargain?"

"Nay," says she, "you know,

" Abbot, where Abel snares you all your trout.
" There 's never a scale of trout in Slingsby brook,
" And though I bid Ben Gogolai not keep count
" How many Abel poaches, every fish,
" If all had right alike, belongs to me.
" Besides, that book,—the Archdeacon said himself
" 'T was worth St. Wigbald's whole year's rent twice told ;
" And more, I would not part with it—"
" Well, well,
" No matter ! " quoth the Abbot, but the Dame
Felt that he meant to have the book, and would.

But how ? Well, maybe you remember him,
Young Randal, nephew of the Prioress ?
A scholar here at the Abbey, where he learnt
At least how not to learn the sciences :
For what with our abundant lack of clerks,
Our liking for the lad and his for play,
The schooling, trivial and quadrivial, all
Fared at the best but evil. Doctrinal,

Donat and Æsop, Cato, small and great,
At seven years' end, I take it, still for him
Were dark as Daniel or the Apocalypse.
No less he found books useful. Once, indeed,
He sent a poet soaring through the skies
Who never else had reached them, Theodule,
With his *Æthiopum terras* torn to strips
And twisted in a kite-tail. More, he learnt
To play at knucklebone with augrim stones,
And found his abacus expressly scored
For nine-men's morris on an indoor scale.
So that, you see, all told, he might have trussed
His sum of scholarship in one round O,
Had it been worth the trussing. Blaize himself,
Not being poet Marcian, who contrived
That wondrous wedding of Dan Mercury
Once on a time to Dame Philology,
Could find no foil to fix his quicksilver.

"Curst knave!" says he, "why learn ye not to read?

"There's nought but gallows in your gait and eye,—
"Gallows from boot to birret, top to toe,
"Yet ye dare scoff at clergy! Come the day
"When ye're caught tripping in your pranks, how then?
"What, can't even spell a neckverse? Learn, I say!
"For of all knaves that ever God let live,
"Unless all promises fail and saws prove false,
"Thou'lt most rue lack of clergy!"
"Nay, no fear,"
Quoth Randal, "You are surety for my life!
"No judge will bid you live that bids me hang!"
Faith, had you bought knave Randal for a fool,
Knave Randal soon had sold you for the same!
You should have seen him on Saint Nicholas' day,
When he was Abbot of Misrule, and shaved
Dickon Precentor clean on half his face,
And tonsured half the bristles of his scalp:
"My son," quoth he, "Thou'rt drunk but thrice a week,
"I cannot make thee more than half a monk!"
Once, too, on Innocents' eve, the day we showed

Hell Harrowed in the chancel every year
Before we turned the pageants out of church,
He read us such a gibe!—Our stage, you know,
Rested upon the roodloft, just above
My stall and Blaize's, all the screen below
Hid by the arras of the Amazons:—
Randal presented Belzebub that year:
But when Saint Peter on his bugle horn
Had blown tantivy for the final soul,
And locked the elect within the golden gates,
Lo, on a sudden, forth leaps Belzebub,
Vaults from the roodloft with a sobresault
Into the pulpit.
"What care I?" quoth he;
"Well robbed, well rid! Yon feeless Janitor
"Up there, I ween, hath weightier cause than I
"To howl a *De Profundis!* Saw ye e'er
"Such lenten lozels as these saintly souls?
"Prime booty, be they not, for Heaven to steal?
"Poor skulking lazars, bare of cross and pile

"As toads of fur or feather! Ragman's Roll
"Would take precedence of their calendar!
"Bah! let the churls live happy! I am content!
"But you, my gallant masters, fear ye not!
"Mine own dear muttons of Saint Werewulf's fold!
"Ye claim no kindred with these babes of grace!
"In yonder kingdom ye nor sow nor mow!
"No, ye are mine, sweet souls, for ever mine!
"O, ere ye schooled me, I was dunce as dull
"As Satanas or Lucifer,—unskilled
"Even to hold yon souls of right mine own,—
"A mere untutored prentice in my craft!
"But now, accepted brother of your guild,
"And master in all mysteries of sin,
"Shall I forget, nor quite ye for the boon?
"Nay, my seraphic doctors! Never yet
"Was Belzebub ungrateful to his peers!
"O, ye shall feast with cardinals and kings
"And all the purpled demi-gods of fame
"At Hell's high table, Dives in the midst,

"Where nevermore shall thief break in and steal
"*In sæcula sæculorum!* Lo, even now
"I go to spread the banquet for my guests!"
With that, my knave louts low and wags his tail,
Clambers from desk to roodloft like a cat,
And skips again into the jaws of Hell!

Well, 't was one Thursday, just on Michaelmas,
At daydawn, Randal starts him off to fish
Down at Saint Wigbald's;—Whether he knew no trout
Were in the brook, or whether he hoped for sport
More to his mind in the Dame's private pond
Behind the cell,—or whether as I surmise,
Diabolo instigante,—God best knows;
But down he walked to the triangular stew
Sacred to poor Dame Aylse's favourite luce.
The Dame,—she had some wry whimsies in her skull,—
Had wont each morn and even, rain or shine,
To cross the croft to this triangular pool
And ring her silver sanctus on the marge,—

The bell, by the way,—a gift from Ulverscroft,
Rang oftener far at mass for Sir John Pike
Than for the sisters, and Sir John, who lurked
Plotting his raids among the chestnut roots
That weave a wattled rampart round the bank
Against the lower floodgate,—when he heard,
Would dart from out his hiding with a swirl,
And shoal on shoal of startled sticklebacks
Leap silver-sided, flash on flash before,
Like sprays of osier when the summer wind
Toys with their upturned leaves, while to and fro,
All proud at heart of argent-damasked mail
And glistening hinges of his golden fins,
The knightly vassal of the pool glanced by
To claim his sovereign's largess. If to-day
She brought a full-fed frog, (she docked the feet
Before she gave him frogs,) to-morrow came
A brace of gudgeon or a slice of beef;
Except indeed on Fridays, when the fare
Was only rye-bread manchet, soaked in milk.

She had her faults, good dame,—for who is free?
But none can say she ever gave her fish
Flesh on a Friday. Once in every year
Moreover, at Saint-John's-tide, after mass,
The Prioress marched with all the sisterhood
And Abel and Ben Gogolai to the pool
And weighed her darling. 'T was a sight to see
Ben Gogolai wheedling with a landing-net,
And Abel with the steel-yard, Michael-like,
Waiting, till spooned out on the shaven turf
Ben clutched the brute adroitly by the eyes
And coiled him gasping in the scale;—that year
I well remember, he just turned nine pounds.

Well, down steps Randal to the pool, when, lo,
Just as he pinned his gudgeon on the hook,
A herd of fat geese from the grange-yard gate
Marched cackling through the meadow. Quick as thought,
Randal was in among them, gripped the neck
Of him who gabbled loudest, held him tight,

Bore him, a fluttering prisoner to the pool,
Made fast his line,—the gudgeon on the hook,
About the fowl's left leg and let him swim.
Dame Juliana Berners, by the way,
Had taught this double treatment in her tract
Then lately printed with new-fangled types
By Caxton at Saint Alban's, which discourse
Being sent, a gift from Sopwell to my Dame,
Was read to Randal through by Margery,
Not without profit,—as the gander felt.

Meanwhile, Ben Gogolai,—What?—You don't know Ben?
The curst old Hebrew with the wooden leg?
Why, he was half the income of the cell!
'T was Blaize,—of course, first saw the man's true worth,
Transmuted him by alchemy to gold,
And minted him. You see, when first he came,
Ben stumped on errands for the Prioress,
Tended the geese, fetched water, piled the logs,
Did all that none else would, got cuffs and kicks,

Victualled on orts,—if ever he got the bones
Before the greyhound, he fared sumptuously.
Blaize came, saw, christened!—Why, the noise it made
Was worth a farm in fee. A Hebrew Jew
Christened at Easter in Saint Werewulf's font!
Never a hallow in five counties round
Was half so holy! Blaize and Ben were saints,
And the whole house a pattern to the world!
Alas! so warm a piety, zeal so true
Found such sweet favour with the Cherubim
That soon 't was all translated to the skies!
At least, none lingered here below. Ere long
Blaize was again but Blaize, and Ben was Ben,
Not saints, nor one nor 't other. Still, our fame
Bruited abroad, pricked other Abbots' souls
To achieve the like, and Blaize, who deemed it shame
To waste such wealth of glory on himself,
Farmed the old Jew to others. Twenty marks
In gold the Abbot of St. Alban's gave
To rebaptize Ben Gogolai,—twenty-five

The Abbot of St. Edmund's, so throughout,
As each in turn converted and baptized,
Called the lost sheep of Judah to the fold,
And showed the world an Israelite indeed.

Ben's single leg was a sore cross to Blaize :
Had he had two, Ben might have dyed his beard,
Filched a new suit, and been another Jew,
Aaron or Levi, Solomon or Saul,
Fit for a fresh conversion. As it was,
'T was hardly politic to baptize him twice
Within a lifetime in the self-same font.
Failing more baptism, Blaize, who ever sought
The glory of God, next thought of miracle.
Could Heaven restore the Hebrew's missing shank,
We, too, might walk more firmly, and support
Fresh fame on that new pillar of the Church.
Deaf brother Cradock was a skilful leech
And mainly cunning in chirurgery.
All that Salerno, all that Oxford taught

Of medicine, magic and astrology
From Galen, Haly or Averröes,
Gilbert or Gatsden, Gordon, Glatisaunt,
Was Cradock skilled in. Marry, if e'er a leech
By leechcraft could work miracle, 't was he!
But though the leg he fashioned was a leg
As natural as a Christian's, for indeed
'T was shaped in willow on Saint Luke's day hewn,
The planets all propitious, save perhaps
That envious Saturn stood just one degree
Too nigh the ascendant,—though the Hebrew's stump
To fit it featly had been seared again
With actual cautery when the moon was full,
Though the fair childlike skin, right cheveril, shamed
Its fellow's true Jew leather,—still, the knee,
Perversely unmiraculous, eschewed
All offices of kneeship; first too lax,—
Then, when the thews were braced, as much too stiff,
Then, when the happy medium seemed just hit,
Lax when 't was wanted stiff, and stiff when lax.

Maugre all Cradock's art, apostate still,
Ben without crutch could only at best achieve
Good-fellow's gait, two stumbles and a fall;
And though Saint Werewulf, doubtless, at a pinch
Would have wrought fifty miracles at once,
Had each one single leg to stand upon,
'T was clear the leg that foundered with a Jew
Could never bear both Jew and miracle.

"Yea, brother Cradock, 't is a goodly leg,"
Quoth Blaize, "a marvel! Avicen himself
"Ne'er wrought more artificial counterfeit!
"Yet, for we live not in the good old days,
"And these New-Learning firebrands of the faith
"Singe us so closely, that 't were well to fling
"No touchwood nigh them,—'t were improvident
"For Providence to interpose herein!
"'T were best, I think, to drop the miracle:
"The leg will give us a name for works of alms."
And so the miracle dropped, and Ben dropped too,

Into a mere Jew menial of my Dame's,
A mongrel cowherd, verdurer, messenger,
Lord Paramount of Saint Wigbald's geese and fish.

Well, as I said before you snapped my web
Of chronicle, Randal scarce had turned adrift
His gander with the gudgeon tied to his leg,
When down limps Ben, blaspheming through the croft,
The Avenging Fate of goose-rape, halt but dread,
Breathing out scourge and cudgel, foam on beard:—
"Thief, thief!—The goose, the goose!—Thou Nazarene hound,
"Come thou within the circle of my crutch
"I'll score a charm on thy Barabbas hide
"Shall teach thee chant *Peccavi* for a month
"To the tune of *Os fregisti!*" Down he bears
Like a lop-sided pirate caravel
Banging his mangonels as he rolls and nears.

Just as he skirts the pool, up Randal leaps,

Butts at his ribs full-tilt without a word,
Rolls him plump backwards, sprawling on the turf,
Clutches his timber peg, and with a wrench
Unscrews it from the stump and leaves him flat,
An Israelite spread-eagle, one leg couped.—
Then, fiddler-like, while low the Avenger lies,
The leg for viol, and the crutch for bow,
Rattles a *Jubilate* in his ears.
"So-ho!" he chuckles, "have I drawn your sting,
"Old hornet Judas? Will you teach me chant,
"My bird of Paradise? Come, suppose you try
"*Adhesit pavimento,—Ecce nunc,*
"Or *Vir beatus qui non abiit,*
"Eh, my heraldic martlet?"
But, meanwhile,
Sir John the pike, who has not yet broke his fast,
Eyes greedily Randal's gudgeon as it trails
Behind the gander, tempting, silvery sweet,
Darts out and gulps it bodily, hooks and all;
Not waiting, graceless infidel, to mark

That still unblessed, the perilous morsel lacks
The matins-tinkle of the silver bell.

Now clangs the din of battle !—Gander, pike,
Pike, gander, tugging, wrestling for the life!
"Hooked, by Saint Wigbald, hooked!"—Off Randal skips,
Flinging Ben's leg and crutch with dexterous aim
Athwart the feathered fisher's mid career;
Clapping his hands and dancing on the marge
As though Saint Vitus kicked him. Ben the while,
Dumb-struck at first, incredulous of the crime,
Sits up and stares bewildered: then, the truth
Through the eyes brainward filtering drop by drop,
'Gins howl "Thieves !—murder !—help ! my leg ! the pike !"
Till, as the royal fray 'twixt fowl and fish
Still fiercer waxes, he forgets to howl,
And watches—eye, mouth, nostril all agape.

Gabbling and plashing half across the pool,

A fleet of goose-down scudding in his wake,
Wrestles the gander, straining web and wing.—
Suddenly halts,—a charm-wrecked argosy
Dreamily foundering in enchanted deeps,
The feathery poop half tugged beneath the waves
By a live anchor. Up he flaps again,
Like a mad trampler in a vintage-vat,
Churning the ripples into foam, his head
Now ducking fruitlessly beneath the surge,
Now lifted cackling his despair to Heaven!
A lull!—Sir John fights sulky. Randal's bird
Now prematurely jubilant, as before
Despairing prematurely, wags his tail
And prunes his ruffled pinions, gabbling low
The while a ditty of gracious self-applause.

Again the poop bobs under!—Off he starts,
The craziest he of biped lunatics,
A gander desperate! Universal earth,
Itself fast shuddering into chaos, holds

But one thing certain, that the pool's bewitched !
Within the unhallowed banks weird sorcery lurks
Fatal to goose-kind ! With a spooming plunge
That trails his torturer victim in his wake
He wrestles shoreward, paddling piteously
With impotent neck outstretched beyond the marge,
So freely near, so inacessible,
With that lithe fiend still jerking at his leg :
Till Randal, conscious of the coming Dame,
Clutching the chance and outstretched neck at once
With his right hand, falls flat, and with his left
Gropes for his pike-line in the muddy ooze,
Unmoors the hapless proxy of his rod,
And lands Sir John in triumph.—Ben, the while,
Weary of shouting, emptied of his oaths,
Turns his grey muzzle to the grass and groans.

But what about this volume ? Nay, no haste !—
You laymen are impatient,—live too quick !
Albertus, in the unfathomable gloss

Which moats his version of the Apocalypse
Against the siege of modern heretics,
'T is true, interpreted beyond a doubt
The world to verge on Antichrist and Doom
More than two centuries since :—still, here we are!
And, say these lollard Doctors speak sheer truth
About the Scarlet Woman in the sun
And other like conundrums, here we are,
Walking Saint Werewulf's cloisters. Two hours hence
We sup with Blaize in the refectory:
Till then, what matter how we slay the time?
Granted your science and philosophy
Divine and human are momentous things :—
I am loath to cavil :—still, my tale 's of geese!
Patience! The tale will end before we sup.

Now, so Saint Werewulf or the devil ordained,
As Randal, flushed with guilt and triumph, sneaked
In at Saint Werewulf's orchard-gate, prize-fraught,
Full front he met the Abbot: "Ha, sir Knave,

"What mischief now?—By'r lady, a noble luce!—
"Where gat ye such?" He lifts Sir John by the eyes
And weighs him by the scale of arm and eye:
"Within five ounces of ten pound," quoth he,
"Where gat ye—" Then the treacherous secret flashed
Across his brain. "Saint Wigbald! 'T is my Dame's!
"Dame Aylse's darling! Why, thou Judas imp!
"Unnatural varlet!—Sirrah, to my cell!
"I'll teach ye how to angle with a rod,
"Poaching your—aunt's pet luce!"
Off Randal slinks:
"Stop!" thunders Blaize, the grin about his mouth
As like the pike's he held as egg to egg,—
"I have spared the rod too long and spoilt the child:
"Hanging's the only heal for neck so stiff!
"Mark me,—hie straightway to my Solomon room
"And creep behind the arras; If one soul
"Catch sight of one-ninth part of a hair of thine
"Till I release thee, 't were as good to dance

" At high noon, honied, on a hornet's nest
" Naked, as meet me after ! Quick, be off ! "

Back strides the Abbot to the buttery hatch,
Leaves the Dame's pike in charge of pantler John :
" Mark,—stuffed, and sodden with sweet herbs and wine,
" And, mind, no hint of garlic ! "—starts once more
Down to Saint Wigbald's sorely vexed at heart.

Meanwhile, the Dame and Margery, hearing Ben
Bawling for help, steered Jewry-ward full sail,
Almost ere Randal's heels were out of sight.
Ben, who till now had ever known the Dame
Tender and pitiful-hearted as a Saint,
Whined out his grief with groans that might have wrung
A crab-tree with compassion ; but the Dame,
No crab-tree, certes,—toward the martyred Jew
Was more than crab-tree callous ! When she heard
'T was Randal's hand had widowed her, " Take tnat ! "
Says she, and flings three minnows in his face,
Meant for the breakfast of the late Sir John,—

"Judas! and that!"—here spits upon his beard
And kicks him; "Marry, a dastard Hebrew dog!
"Randal!"—another kick, but Margery here
Catches and holds her back by sleeve and hood:
"May all the lies that gender in thy heart
"Be turned to weevils, fiery canker-worms
"To fret thy vitals, ere they reach thy lips!
"Randal, forsooth! And thou, thou polecat Jew,
"Sittest and watchest, waitest patiently,
"Heedless and helpless, scarecrow as thou art!
"And Randal—Randal," here the wrath broke down
Into a pitiful whimper, "killed my pike!
"Killed!—Margery, Margery! Randal killed my pike!"

Well, Margery led the Dame across the croft,
Fetched spice and comfits, milk and peppermint,
Then found and sent old Abel to the Jew.
Blaize in the meantime enters, finds the Dame:—
"Lord, Abbot, here so soon?—You've heard our news?"
She whimpered, "take a draught of peppermint;

"'T is sovereign to corroborate the heart!"
A sniff—"That Judas, Ben!"—another sniff:
"'T is my belief Ben helped him!"—"H'm!" quoth
Blaize,
"I have baulked Dan Randal's poaching, anyway!
"Why, let such tales get wind about the court,
"And Heaven knows what might happen!" "True,"
says she,
'But, Abbot, what do you mean about the boy?"
"Oh, he,—the thief? I packed him off at once
"With Joce,"—now mark ye, Joce had angered Blaize
Again the night before, rebuking him
The brethren by, for swearing at the dice
When Cradock won the dagger and silver sheath,
And Blaize, five cups of Rhenish in his brain,
Vowed that he'd roast him at the stake ere Yule
In Slingsby bull-ring for a heretic:
So Joce ere morrow morning took the hint,
His books and his departure. Blaize, you see,
In lying, always built his lies on truth:—

"Joce hates me, as you know, and I hate Joce;
"So when I knew 't was Randal killed your pike,
"I packed the brace of traitors off at once
"To Grimleysdyke, to try our penitent cell."

"Gramercy, Blaize,—why Joce will kill the lad!"
Breaks in the Prioress. "Kill the lad? Not he!
"I scarce suppose he loves him overmuch,
"But kill,——Besides, I bade on no account
"To keep him fasting more than twice a week,
"Nor scourge him more than twice, nor then with knots
"Bigger than beans." The Prioress stared and paled.—
"Good Lord, Blaize Archer!"—then she clutched his arm,
Glared straight into his eyes, nor breathed, nor winked,
Then loosed her fingers on his arm, and sighed,—
"You're a hard man, Blaize Archer, hard and false!
"What is 't you want? God knows I am poor enough!"

Blaize gulped a dose of peppermint and coughed.
"Nay, Dame, 'tis I should ask what is't you want,

"I—I want nothing!"—"This, forgive the lad!
"'Twas but a madcap frolic!"—"Yea," quoth he,
"But madcap tricks are rank as murder now!
"Hath he not brought our holy faith to shame,
"And jeoparded our houses? Still, perchance;—
"Well, Dame, I'll think about it!" Then, as one
Who knows he has lied to one who knows he lies,
With brazen courtesy bids good day, and parts.

Returned, he had scarce dispatched three larded quails
With a half-stoup of egg-whip hypocras,
When lo, my Dame rides ambling on her mule
Up to Saint Werewulf's, Abel close behind,
Puffing and staggering under half a buck.
Blaize lifts the Prioress from the selle;—"Why, Dame,
"What cheer? How fresh thou'rt looking! By my hand,
"This evil time hath been so busy of late
"Vexing the souls of statesmen and of clerks,
"He clean forgets you quiet godly dames;
"Withers us doctors,—leaves you fair and young!"

So kisses her and enters, hand in hand,
And leads her, fluttered, to the Solomon-room.

"Abbot," says she, "I have brought ye half a buck:
"'Twas killed—our Lady's octave—why, let's see,
"To-morrow will be the fortnight. Come, the lad!
"Say you forgive him!"—Randal, who the while
Behind the arras—'twas a Flanders piece
Of the Wise King's just judgment—watched the twain
Through a small rent whose dog's-ear lid curled wide
Just where the right hand of the doomsman grasps
The huge gold-hilted falchion, heaved to halve
The live child 'twixt the mothers, pricked his ears.
"Tell me, at least, he's safe!" "Yea, safe enow,"
Quoth Blaize, "I'll warrant Joce will see him safe!
"They are safe enough at Grimleysdyke ere now:
"As to the penance, maybe——" "Blaize," says she,
"I'll swear thou'rt lying by thy naughty smile!
"'Twas just that smile was ever on the lips
"Of my poor darling"—Here she wiped her eyes

And fell to whimpering: "Tell me where he *is*!
"Look, here's the silver bell from Ulverscroft:
"Now my pike's gone, I want no silver bells,
"And you, perhaps, may value it! Nay, come,
"Tell me where Randal is, and take the bell!"

"I tell thee, Dame, he's gone to Grimleysdyke
"With Joce, to do strict penance in the cell.
"Still, since thou plead'st for him so urgently,
"Suppose I say three months instead of twelve,
"And take him back at Christmas? Art content?"

"Randal three months with Joce at Grimleysdyke,
"And I content? Blaize Archer, body and soul
"Have I been none but yours this thirty years,
"Come Whitsun, and though false ye've been and are,
"God knows I am true to you as false to Him!
"Jesu forgive me!—'Tis a cruel thing
"A father to set ransom on his child
"And bid the mother pay to the utmost mite!

"Once was a time you loved the lad and me;
"Him for my sake you loved, and me for his!
"Blaize! Where's my boy and thine, thou kindless man!
"Unnatural father!—Here, is't this you crave?"
With that, she draws from out her purfled sleeve
This book you speak of, Fabian's Manuscript,
Dusted and furbished up, with clasps like gold,
A bait to snare an emperor or pope,—
"I knew you meant to have it!" Blaize sat mute.
"Speak, Blaize, a' God's name!" Smiling, up he rose
And kissed her. "Bless thee, thou'rt a kindly soul!
"Randal, thou knave, come hither!"
Sore abashed
The culprit creeps from under Solomon's throne:—
"Down on thy marrowbones, thou graceless imp,
"And sue forgiveness!"—"Randal, mine own boy!"
The Dame could say no more, but hugged the lad
As if he had saved her soul, not killed her pike!

"Bless thee, my son!" quoth Blaize: "Man's life's a span!

" Why make that span unhappy? Here, you see,
" We all are happy! Thou, thou hast caught thy luce,
" And a fine brace of parents! This good Dame
" Finds, for the nonce, a sweetheart and a son!
" And I,—thus ever virtue reaps reward,—
" I, too, achieve my guerdon:—first, the fish,
" Item, a side of venison, nearly ripe,
" Item, a silver sanctus,—item, this,
" This goodly volume, useless to my Dame,
" And last, a conscience void of all offence!"

Incipiunt multi, non perficiunt bona stulti.

THE THREE KINGS OF COLOGNE.

THESE be the three that followed the Star:
Caspar, Melchior, Balthazàr.
They were Kings, but the Gospel calls them Wise;
Nor let this be matter of doubt or surprise,
For they lived in the olden time, and then
'Twas the custom of Kings to be Wise men.
But let us not therefore sinfully err
By interpreting "Magus" as Sorcerer;
For though Simon did rightly bear the name,
Yet in this case it meaneth not the same,
As was plain to be seen when Simon flew
On the foul fiend's back up into the blue,
For the fiend at the praying of Peter and John

Shot him off like a sack, and brake his neck-bone.
And as 'twould be heresy to suppose
That a like mischance could have happened to those,
So the name of Magus, 'tis equally clear,
Not always intendeth a Sorcerer.
They were Kings, and Three Wise Kings, in faith,
And we learn whence they came by what David saith,
QUOD REGES THARSIS ET INSULÆ
With those of Saba and Araby
To the Prince of Peace should their gifts present,
The King whom all GENTES SERVIENT.
But some there be of the Doctors who say
That they came from Mesopotamia,
A land which lieth, as they surmise,
Betwixt two rivers of Paradise,
Phison, to wit, and Hiddekel;—
But that which we know not we cannot tell.

ORIETUR STELLA EX JACOB, I
Have read in the book named Numeri,

Where the Advent Balaam doth foretel,
ET CONSURGET VIRGA DE ISRAEL,
Which is to say that the Kings from afar
Should arise and follow after the Star;
For "virga," which meaneth a rod, 'tis clear,
He useth for kingly sceptre here.
So when they beheld the Star, they knew
By its looks that Balaam's words were true,
And they rose with their camels and companies,
And gifts of most precious merchandise;
And came, for the Star was guiding them
To the gates of the great Jerusalem.
"Where is the child? What news, what news
"Of Him who is born the King of the Jews?"
And they answered, "O Kings, our news is none,
"For Kaiser Herod hath never a Son."

Then Herod himself came forth, in dread,
And spake to the Three Wise Kings, and said,
With glozing words: "O Kings of the East,

"I have heard it told by Prophet and Priest,
"That the Christ who shall come of David's stem
"Shall be born in the city of Bethlehem;
"If there ye find him, return and tell,
"That myself may worship the Child as well."

Then the Star sailed on, and the Kingly Three,
With their gifts, and camels, and company,
Followed amain by valley and hill
And river and flat, till the Star stood still
O'er the holy spot where the Child-King lay
In a stable in Bethlehem Ephrata.

And now ye may see why the Kings were Wise,
For foolish Kings would have doubted their eyes
When they saw the Star stand still in the air;
For who could have dreamed that a King was there,
There, in the stable, with ox and ass?
Yet the Wise Men knew it might come to pass,
And they entered the stable reverently

As the Court of a kinglier majesty,
The Court of the King of Kings, whose sway
The Princes of Earth must all obey.
And there on his Mother's knees He sate,
A new-born Child in His low estate;
But they saw through the veil of outward things
The Lord of Lords, and the King of Kings;
And every mother, and every child,
For the sake of that Maiden undefiled
And her spotless Son they knew should be
God's witness on earth to eternity.
And they knelt and worshipped, and each laid down
At the feet of the Child his sceptre and crown.

Then Caspar offered his gifts of gold,
To signify thus, as the Doctors hold,
That the child was KING. And behold, the Child
Took the gold in his little hands and smiled,
And gave, all earthly gold above,
In return—the Heavenly gold of LOVE.

Then Melchior came with his frankincense,
Meaning thereby in a mystic sense,
That the Child was GOD. And behold, the Child
Took the spice in his little hands and smiled,
And for earthly incense, the story saith,
Gave the Heavenly frankincense of FAITH.

Then Balthazàr knelt last with the myrrh,
Bitter and precious, from whence we infer
That the Child was MAN. And behold, the Child
Took the myrrh in his little hands and smiled,
And did for his earthly myrrh assign
The Heavenly myrrh of a HOPE divine.

And Mary maid, with her mother's hand
Gave each of the Three a swaddling band,
A swaddling band of those that He wore,
As a token to treasure for evermore,
And humbly, humbly, the Three Wise Men
Turned each to his country, home again;

And the Star that had risen to bid them come,
Turned back to the East to guide them home.

Then laid they aside all earthly state
Their Heavenly sovereign to emulate;
Laid by the sceptre, and crown, and ball,
And the golden robe and the purple pall:
And their gold and rubies they gave to the poor,
For the sake of the Child whose gifts they bore;
And preached in the city and wilderness
The news of the new-born Prince of Peace.

Full forty years by desert and town
They told of His Advent up and down,
Till good Saint Thomas the Three did find,
As they taught in the furthest parts of Ind,
And baptized them all in the name of Christ,
As appears by an old Evangelist,
Who saith besides that the Holy One
Gave them other and brighter crowns to don,

For He crowned them all, ere He called them home,
With the thorny crown of martyrdom,
And, beyond the gates of the world of strife,
Evermore with the golden crown of Life.

And the Empress Helena gathered their bones,
And set them with gold and with ruby stones,
And treasured them up in a holy shrine
Of the church in the city of Constantine.
But when Godfrey was King of Jerusalem,
Bishop Eustace to Milan translated them,
And thence, with a nail of the Holy Cross,
They were stolen by Emperor Barbaross,
And Bishop René laid every bone
In the shrine of the Kings, in the Church of Cologne,
And there in rubies written in full,
Ye may read for a ducat on every skull
The names of the Three who followed the Star,
Caspar, Melchior, Balthazàr.

DOMINO GRATIAS. Haply to-night
I shall speak of the shepherds, and tell you aright
Of Abishai, Sobothai, Balchias,
And what is implied by the Ox and Ass.

ST. BERNARD.

THE holy man sits chanting in his cell,
Bernard, than whom the golden gloriole
None fitlier circleth with its saintly spell.
"VENITE EXULTEMUS!" All his soul
Makes music of the words, and harmonies
Well up unbidden as he sings, and roll
Echoes of harping from half-opened skies
Flooding the cloistral glooms with angel song,
Till the full strain of those sweet symphonies
Swells in his heart with eloquence too strong
For human speech, and o'er his organ keys
Flinging his quivering fingers, to prolong
That hymn celestial—by his side he sees
Him who is aye beside him, with a smile—

His own smile—on his lips, and words like these,
Hissing between them : " Aye, this hour awhile
" They have been listening—Roch and Flamian,
" Sigar and Blaize, and all the saintly file.
" Look at the grating there ! When you began,
" Did you not mark the bald-pates ? aye, and feel
" How the whole cloister hearkened as you ran
" So sweetly through the gamut ? I appeal
" To your own conscience." But the saint was mute,
And a strange horror crept from head to heel.
Then with himself as who had held dispute,
" I am a sinful man, O Lord !" he said,
" And viler in thine eyes than the dumb brute ;
" Yea, guilt is with me even as I tread
" These holy heights of song : Be merciful,
" That I may worship thee without all dread !
" Get thee behind me, Sathanas ! Thou dull
" Snake ! not for thee did I begin my song,
" For thee will I not stint it." And the full
Aisles heard the saint till morn chant loud and long.

A CHARM.

When at Easter on thy lea
First thicklegged lamb thou see,—
If upon the greenwood side
Brock or crafty fox be spied,
Goodman, turn thy money!

If the magpie or the jay
Or the lapwing cross thy way,
Or the raven from his oak
Ban thee hoarsely with his croak,
Goodman, turn thy money!

If when at the hearth thou sit
Spark from out the fire should flit,—

If when wintry tempests beat
Candle wear a winding-sheet,
Goodman, turn thy money!

If the wizard's ring appear
Round the moon, or if thou see her
Full or new,—or, worse mishap,
New with old upon her lap,
Goodman, turn thy money!

If the salt thou chance to spill,
Token sure of coming ill,—
If thirteen sit down to sup
And thou first have risen up,
Goodman, turn thy money!

Goodman true, wouldst fend thyself
From witchcraft and midnight elf?
Wouldst thou dree no faery harm?
Keep in mind my simple charm,
Goodman, turn thy money!

Goodman, learn my charm and verse!
Learn to carry poke or purse!
And, that not in vain thou learn,
Somewhat keep therein to turn!—
Goodman, turn thy money!
Quoth Fabian.

OF ROBIN HOOD'S DEATH AND BURIAL.

Bold Robin is at the Kirkleys
For a deed that is y-do,
And threescore and three of the king's men
Came to fetch him therefro.

"Now dup the gate," quoth the king's men,
"So quickly as ye may,
"And yield ye the traitor that liggeth here
"Or ye shall rue the day."

Then up and spoke the Abbess
That was his sister dear:
"My lords, there is never a traitor
"This day that liggeth here!"

Thereat Lord Perryn he waxed wood
And tirled the hair on his lip,
Quoth he, "Bold Robin he liggeth here,
"And hence he shall not slip!

"For we have rid fro Saint Alban's
"With letters fro the king:
"They are written with his own hand
"And sealed with his ring."

"Then," quoth the Abbess, "ye may stand without
"And tirl the hair on your chin!
"The king may bear his letters himself,
"I nill not let ye in!"

Then spoke the false Lord Newbery,
"A parlous dame, parfay!
"But an if bold Robin Hood be here,
"We will kill him this day!"

"Ye traitor, false Lord Newbery,"
Spake up the Abbess than:
"She was my mother's tiring-maid
"That was thy sire's leman!

"There nis not one false loon as ye
"In all broad England!
"An I were a man as ye're a girl
"I'd slay thee with my hand!"

"See now," quôth Lord Newbery,
"We do but parle in vain!"—
They brought an axe and a beetle,
And split the door in twain.

"Come down," then spoke Lord Perryn,
"Come down, thou bold outlaw!
"Ye shall be hanged on a tree,
"Ye have a man y-slaw!"

"Ye may not take me hence," quoth Robin,
"Ye may not do me die!—
"For this is the sanctuary
"And Saint Chad's jawbone hereby!"

"Nay then," quoth Lord Newbery,
"Sith we may not do thee die,
"Yet we'll have a basin of thy blood
"Or ever we pass hereby!"

Lord Newbery drew a bodkin
And pricked him on the arm:
I wot the traitor leugh to see
His heartis blood run warm!

"A basin, a basin hither," he said,
"To catch the blood fro the vein!
"Until the basin be full of blood
"He shall not forth again!"

He pricked a hole in the basin
That nobody should know ;—
And ever bold Robin bled above,
And the blood tricked forth below.

'My sister," then quoth bold Robin,
"As thou art lief and true,
"So fetch me an arrow hither,
"Bot and my bow of yew !—

"For these bin traitors here
"That have a true man in hold
"They are a-draining my lifeblood,
"My heart it is acold !—"

Then up and went his sister,
I wot she was not slow :
She brought to him an arrow
Bot and she brought his bow.

Bold Robin uprist fro the bed,
His cheek was white to see :—
" I will," quoth he, " where ye find this arrow,
" There ye shall bury me.

" And ye shall bear Friar Tuck on hand
" That he aye say mass for my soul,
" That Mary mother and may
" Me free fro pain and dole !"—

He took his bent bow in his hand,
And a broad arrow he let flee :
Seven furlongs he shot the arrow
Whereat it stuck in a tree.

Spoke out bold Robin than,
I wis his voice was small ;
" Farewell, dear sister, Christ ye speed,
" Sith it may no better befal !

" And find ye Little John,
" And give him my bugle horn,
" For there nis never a better fellawe
" To kill the deer in the morn.

" Ye shall give my bow to Friar Tuck
" That is a bold outlaw,
" To lesen a merchant's girdle
" All in the greenwood shaw.

" And ye shall tell my merrymen all,
" Maid Marian also,
" That I am y-slaw right treacherously,
" Ne shall go forth no mo

" To slay the king's deer in the valleys
" Or rob a bishop at noon,
" Or to feast in merry Sherwood,
" For I shall die full soon.

"We were the merriest company
"Was ever in broad England,
"But Robin is slayen treacherously
"As I well understand!

'Now lay the salt on my bowel,
"And shut mine eyen tway:
"I nill no priest but Friar Tuck,
"And he is far away."

Then up and spoke Lord Perryn
And spoke unto his fere:
"Thou hast y-slaw the bravest man
"That ever brittled a deer!

"I will to the King presently
"And tell him thy treachery!
"And I will twist the willow
"To hang thee on a tree!"

They bare bold Robin fro fair Kirkleys
And laid him on a bier:
They dolve a grave beneath the arrow
And covered it with brere.

A cross y-corve above his head,
Another at his feet;
And the pricket belleth in Bernesdale,
There nis none now to shete!

Now Mary mother and sweet Saint John
Have grace on bold Robin Hood,
And keep us all fro traitors false
At home and eke abroad!—
Quoth Fabian.

JUDAS ISCARIOT'S PARADISE.

De Sancto Brendano Filio Finloch.

QUI DESCENDUNT MARE IN NAVIBUS,
'Tis David the Prophet who speaketh thus,
VIDERUNT OPERA DOMINI :—
And lo, forthwith he telleth us why;
For skyward up with a sudden sweep,
Then down they are borne to the yawning deep;—
Therefore he that hath sailed in a ship can tell
Of the things of Heaven and things of Hell.

Saint Brandon, Abbot of Inisfail,
Listened, we read, and wept at the tale

That was told in his cell by Beryn the sage,
Of Mernoc, his godson's pilgrimage:
How he sailed and sailed far away to the East,
Till he came to the land of the Lord's behest,
The promised land of the Saints, that lies
Full in front of the Gates of Paradise,
Where Enoch waits for the days of Doom
With Elias alone till the Lord shall come;—
A land of glory and life and light,
Where never is storm, nor winter, nor night,
And the air, with holy wings astir,
Breathes bridal incense of balm and myrrh,
And the strands are of ruby and diamond,
With cliffs of the virgin gold beyond,
Cloven by streams from the sheeny glades
Of fair palm copses and cedarn shades,
Where the herbs are all flower, the trees all fruit—
Heaven over the head, heaven under the foot—
Where the summers fly so swift, so sweet,
So happy that none may feel them fleet;

And the child might change to the dotard gray
Ere he weened he had dwelt there a single day

And Brandon the Abbot heard and wept—
And lo, that night by his couch as he slept,
Stood One with wings, who looked to the North,
And pointed two fingers, and bade—"Go forth!"

And the Saint uprose, and two by two,
He called twelve brothers, trusty and true;
And, "Brothers," he said, "will ye sail with me,
"For the love of God and His dear Ladye?"
And, "Father," they answered, "all earthly good
"We have left for His sake who died on rood;
"Master art thou, and captain, and friend—
"We will sail with thee to the Mid-world's End!"

And they prayed evermore, and kept a fast,
With penance, till forty days were past;
And dight them a ship with tackle and gear,

And sails and anchors and helms to steer,
And seven years' provender, wine, and bread,
And prayed and toiled till the whole was sped.

And lo, as they marched with banners before,
And DOMINE DIRIGE forth to the shore,
Two brethren knelt and prayed by the road—
"Let us sail with you for the love of God!"
And the Abbot said, "Yea, ye may sail with us,
"Sith Christ the Father ordaineth it thus:
"Yet, mark!—of ye twain, there is one shall flit,
"Ere the bark turn homeward, alive to the Pit!"

So forth they sailed whither God might send,
Were it even to fare to the Mid-world's End.
And the wind blew fair and the waves rolled bright,
And they trusted in God and their hearts were light.

Now the marvels they met on the yeasty deep—
Of the fiends and fish, and the Land of Sheep,

And the fruits and flowers and gems therein ;
Of the Worm of the world, hight Jascomyn,
Who wrestles and gnashes ever again
To grasp his tail in his teeth in vain,
So huge, that the mariners landed awhile
On the ridge of his spine, and deemed it an isle,
Till they lit them a fire, and felt it creep
And shudder and shrink to the whirling deep ;
Of the Paradise isle, where the soft wing beat
Of God's white fowl maketh music sweet ;
Of the wondrous stead in the summer sea,
Where the sharks lay slumbering peacefully,
Shoaled as close as the drifted snow,
Like a floor on the hidden strands below,
Of beast, and man, and vision divine,
And peril, and tempest, and holy sign ;
Of lands and seas in a world unknown,
And all that they saw betwixt zone and zone,
I pass to tell, for the time would fail
Ere complines ring to finish the tale.

But to prove that the Psalmist's words be true
When he saith in my text that the mariner crew
Both mount to Heaven and sink to Hell,
Ye shall hear how the same to the Saint befell.

Incipit de Juda Iscariote.

Mightily ever the South wind blew,
And North, ever North, the good ship drew
With the holy Brandon, and Brandon's crew.

North, ever North, till a glimmering dun
That lighted the icebergs, one by one,
Was all they knew of the noon-day sun.

On, through the darkness, and mist and snow,
Or a grisly moonlight, that served to show
How the sea snakes writhed in the deep below.

They heard, in the night, the icebulks crash
With a thundering shock, and grind, and gnash,
And the waves hiss back with a seething plash.

Nor anchor was cast, nor sail was furled,
Till they neared and saw where the fringe of the world
Its arrows of flame through the welkin hurled.

And at Christmas, so near as they could count,
They came to an isle where a mighty mount
Spouted fire and smoke in a blazing fount.

Full many a mile there was smoke on the sea,
And the blaze ever leapt to the cloudracks free,
Rumbling and bellowing hideously.

And one cried, "Satanas calls—farewell!
"For yonder mount is the mouth of Hell!"
And they saw him no more, but heard fiends yell.

And northward still, on that Christmas Day
They fared, till they saw where an iceberg lay
On the left, and the Saint bade steer that way.

And they saw One, naked, sit on a stone,
Worn by the waves to sinew and bone,
Wringing his hands with a dolorous moan.

A long loose cloth was thonged by his chin,
That flapped in the wind on his wet bare skin,
And ox tongues two were tied to his shin.

And now in the wave, and now in the wind,
Drenched, and pinched, and beaten, and blind,
The wretch ever sat on his stone and pined.

And the Saint said, "Speak, be thou man or ghost,
And tell what thou art, for a thing so lost
Never greeted I yet by wave or coast!"

And he answered:—"I, ere I went to pain,
Was the Lord's Iscariot chamberlain,
Judas, who sold the Christ for gain!"

Then the shipmates all were aghast for fear,
But the good Saint bade cast anchor near,
And asked of the ghost: "What dost thou here?"

And Judas answered: "By Christ's dear grace
"This day am I loosed from mine own due place
"With Herod and Pilate and Caiaphas;

"For He whom the Gates of the Hells obey
"Each winter hath granted me here to stay
"From Christmas Eve for a night and a day.

"And this is my Paradise, here alone
"To sit with my cloth and tongues and stone,
"The sole three things in the world mine own.

"This cloth I bought from the Lord's privy purse,
"But gave to a leper.—It hath this curse,
"That it beats on my skin, but it saves from worse.

"These tongues I gave to the poor for meat
"In the name of Christ,—and the fish that eat
"Thereon as they list, forbear my feet.

"This stone I found by a road where it lay
"And set for a step in a miry way,
"Therefore sit I on stone, not ice, this day!"

Then a rout of Fiends came flying amain
With a roar and a rush like a hurricane
To bear the Iscariot back to pain.

But their might was nought, for the Saint was nigh,
And round and round with a ghastly cry
And clapping of wings they flew harmless by.

"Flee hence, flee hence!" they howled and hissed:
"Already in Hell is its darling missed!
"Wilt thou save the traitor who sold the Christ?"

And the Saint said, " Nay, my might is none,
" But if Jesus will that ye leave him alone
" For another night, God's will be done ! "

And they screamed and fled to their Hell once more.
And Judas thanked Brandon o'er and o'er
So piteously that all wept sore.

And they bided there through the dreary night,
And they knew 't was morn by a fiendish flight
And the shriek as they fled of a tortured sprite.

And mightily, lo, the North Wind blew,
And South, ever South, the good ship drew
With the holy Brandon and Brandon's crew.

Explicit de Juda Iscariote.

In a year and a day Saint Brandon's sail
Was furled in the harbour of Inisfail,

And merrily thronged the brotherhood all,
Sacristan, Cellarer, great and small,
With welcome of laughter and welcome of tears
For the mariner Saint and his holy peers.
And huge was the feasting far and wide
Through the minster lands that Christmastide.
And the Saint sat at meat on the twelfth Yule-day,
And spake of the sea and the perilous way,
And told, with the rest, of the rock of ice,
And Judas Iscariot's Paradise;
And how for a night they had anchored by,
Lest the fiends who waited and watched should spy.

And the Sacristan spake: "'T was the very morn
"Next after the day that Christ was born,
"As I stepped in the gloaming to toll the bell
"For matins, behold, I stumbled and fell,
"With a broken shin and an arm bruised sore,
"On an anchor that clung by the chapel door.
"And I shouted, and, lo, at the noise of my shout,

"The half-clad brothers ran staring out;
"And there as we stood in a scared suspense,
"A cable, that hung from none knew whence,
"Hauled the anchor again up into the sky,
"And we deemed that we heard thy shipmates cry!"

And Saint Brandon answered: "It well may be,
"For I deem that we sailed in that upper sea
"Of waters which Moyses saith were pent
"At the first o'erarching the firmament.
"For the firmament standeth fast, we know,
"'Twixt the waters above and the waters below;
"And, certes, above the sphere of the sun
"We sailed that voyage, for day was none,
"Save a glimmer of grey in the misty air,
"Though I marvel much how the moon came there.

"Yet beware how ye seek too curiously
"To fathom Creation's mystery;
"For Science, ye know, is the cub that is yeaned

"By human Pride to the great Arch-Fiend;
"But Faith, an angel born in the shrine
"Of the child-like heart, by a grace Divine!
"Wherefore pray ye for faith, and the God of Love,
"After life's strange voyage, give rest above!
"UT IN ÆTERNALI GAUDIO
"BENEDICAMUS DOMINO!"

AMEN.

CHARLEMAGNE'S DAUGHTER.

Aix lay asleep; the window-gaps of light
All shut save one,—roof, tower and bastion black.
Great Charles's palace loomed against a flight
Of rolling darkness fringed with flying rack,
Like a magician's barque that drives forthright
Through wave-upheaving winds with level track:
Sole in the spiry glooms one ray remote
Pierced the tall scarp and shuddered on the moat.

A true-born slip, I ween, of Pepin blood
Was she who called that maiden bower her own:
A stone's throw from the palace, there it stood,
A little miracle of carven stone—

A younger Sibyl's watchtower o'er the flood
Beyond the courtyard elm-tree, all alone;
Where she might idle all unvexed, or read,
Or watch the stars, or ply the storied brede.

And there she sat that night, an empire's pearl—
Emma, the darling, fairest, dearest, last
Of all the old lion's brood. A blithe-eyed girl
Lay nestling at her feet with glance upcast
Under her plaited wealth of golden curl,
Watching the while what fleeting daydreams passed
Cloudshadow-like athwart her lady's brow,
And lips in silence eloquent even now.

Fronting the fire she sat, half disarrayed,
On a low bench, and with her coronet
Testing the dazzle of its gems she played,
Eyed it askance at armslength now, or set,
Golden on locks as golden of her maid;
Her sad eye glistening with a proud regret:

Ah, might she thus slip all the hoops of state
And win the freedom of her menial's fate.

" Yea," quoth the Princess, " I am all alone!
" My sire forgets the sweet days of his youth,
" And claims my heart's love-offerings for his own.
" The old grey warrior deems that maiden truth
" May thrive on snow, and bud for aye unblown
" Like yonder sculptured roses! Love and ruth
" He scarce remembers even as things that were—
" Fled wholly, like the raven from his hair!

" Look at this thumb-ring, with its emerald gem,
" He gave me but this morn;—a sovereign charm,
" He told me, to true maidens. Why, the hem
" Of robe of mine hath virtue that would warm,
" I ween, Alraschid's whole green diadem,
" And bid it blush true ruby with alarm!
" O could he read me! Why am I thus fair?
" Will the red blood run white with all his care?

"Child! I could dance away John Baptist's head
"From any Herod in my father's hall—
"Drain the old hoards of dynasties, and tread
"Under my feet their crowns and purple pall,
"With half my beauty! Lo, I ask for bread—
"He answers with an emerald to my call!
"Yet must I love him—love him though he tear
"All love from life, save love in love's despair!

"O, I could groan for yearning when I hear
"His voice among the yew-trees, and he calls
"Emma, his darling, while the big round tear,
"Wrung from the weariness of king-craft, falls
"Through his thin fingers as his child draws near!
"His child! Ay me, 'tis there the kindness galls!
"Were he less dear I might be happier; now
"I love him and am loved. Ah, mercy! how?

"Loveless!" Her head dropped down upon her hand,
And tranced she sat in passion of mute woe,

A queenly star-struck Melancholy, scanned
The while by pleading eyes that seemed to know
Somewhat, yet scarce the whole could understand.
"Loveless, mine own dear lady! Is it so?
"My Wilhelm chanced to see you in the yard
"Talking, or so it seemed, with Eginhard,

"Haply on some state-business?"—"Well, what then?"
Quoth Emma, "Is it some portentous thing
"For a king's child to speak? 'Tis like these men!
"They can't even see one talking, but they wring
"Some left-hand meaning from it, and unpen
"A herd of bleating scandals! If the king
"Had sent old grand-dam Alice, they're so wise
"They'd swear 'twas some brisk courtier in disguise!

"What! talking with her pedagogue at noon—
"And in the courtyard? O these lovers' schemes!
"Why, the next step is parricide! How soon
"Your Wilhelm spies it all! I'd swear he deems

"My Euclid lessons rarely opportune
"For lovers' converse, and my tasks and themes
"One long first conjugation in their sense—
"*Amo, amas* in every mood and tense!

"Trust him, he knows it all! A woman's heart
"Is easy as his alphabet to read,
"To Wilhelm's amorous wit! We act our part,
"But he, he knows us!"—Quoth the maid: "Indeed,
"He marked not you but him, and saw him start
"Like a deer arrow-stricken in mid-speed
"To find such watchful eyes so near, and straight
"Bade you adieu and vanished through the gate.

"What! love the Notary,—you? My Wilhelm knows
"Your kin too well to dream it! Why, to-day
"He served at supper, when a talk arose
"Among the peers what emperor should pray
"Your hand in wedlock, and he heard propose
"Him of Arabia one, and one Cathay:

"Till last my lord spoke, frowning o'er his wine—
"'Emma, my daughter, weds not!—she is mine!'

"And you to love the Notary? Overbold
"Were he who dreamed it! Yet if all be true,
"As true I ween it is, that Wilhelm told
"Of what he saw, this Eginhard loves you!
"What think you?"—But her lady's eyes were cold
And her lips silent. Then anon she threw
Her weary arms into the air—"'Tis late!
"Good night—I am weary of this prate.

"Come to me early!"—In a dreamy mood
Twisting around her head the golden maze
Of plaited locks awhile the maiden stood;
Folded her scarf before the ruddy blaze,
Then donned at last her sandal-shoon of wood
And left the warm hearth with a lingering gaze.
"Good night!"—and forth, one aguish Ave said,
She pattered to the palace home to bed.

The Princess shot the bolt, and shivering knelt
A few brief holy moments;—but they wrought
No hope, no solace. All alone she felt
In the wide world. "What boots it," thus she thought,
"This emptiness of empire? I would melt
"Yon crownal into chessmen, tread to nought
"These stony gauds of glory for the power
"To love and be loved but for one brief hour.

"Father! Is he a father, who thus dares
"Trample his children's heart's-life in the dust?
"And yet—I know not! Eginhard! He wears
"A courtier's aspect, as a courtier must.
"Yet Wilhelm deems he loves me!—loves and bears,
"Haply, this same sad fardel of mistrust.
"O, dost thou love me? I am all unblest,
"Loved or unloved; yet men should know men best,

"And Wilhelm"—but even then a hurried knock
Rattling the latch called back her vagrant thought

To the blank present, and around her smock
Hastily flinging a loose scarf, she sought
The chamber door, and one hand on the lock—
"Well, child, what is it? Why, you might have brought,"
She said, half-vexed, "that same John Baptist's head,
"To call me here at midnight from my bed!"

But a voice answered: "'Tis not Ermengilde—
"I bear you here a message from the king!"
She started, trembling. That low whisper thrilled
Through her whole being, and a sudden sting.
As of one caught in treason unfulfilled
Shot through her veins. "What message do you bring?
"And who are you?" she asked. One might have heard
Her heart the while beat like a prisoned bird.

And the voice answered: "Eginhard,—I bear
"A message to his daughter from my lord.
"Prithee, unmake the door!—The chill night-air

"Cuts through the cloudy darkness like a sword."—
"Say on!" she answered, but his ear was ware
Of a strange tremulous falter in the word,
And in a louder tone he made reply:
"Haste thee,—unmake the door! The watch is nigh,

"And they will slay me should they take me here!
"Hearken,—mayst hear their tramp! By heaven,
wouldst kill
"One who hath held thy father's life so dear?
"If thou must deal me death, were't well to spill
"My blood upon your threshold? Quick! Dost fear
"Lest slanderous tongues should babble aught of ill?
"How, when the captains hear yon ruffians prate
"Of whispering courtiers pinioned at your gate?"

With that she drew the bolt and let him in,
And closed the door behind him as the watch
Clanked past the bastion-angle with a din
Of iron-clashing heels. She even could catch

A hoarse low burden chanted, "Ill to win,
"And ill to win!" as breathless, hand on latch,
She stirred not till they past, and silence fell
More dread than clamour in her maiden cell.

She turned as if to speak. The lantern stood
With its long candle glimmering by the chair,
Arras and broidered couch and ivory rood
And dizzy floor-mosaic, all were there,
And he—that Presence!—all the fugitive blood,
Dismayed to front the invader unaware,
Bounded o'erthronging to the citadel;
Once the heart quaked and all amort she fell!

In dread misgiving, as if suddenly
He saw an angel out of heaven drop dead,
The love-lorn lover cushioned reverently
That living corse of beauty on the bed,
And clasped the marble fingers:—"Can she die?
"Jesu have mercy on us both!" The head

Stirred, or he thought it stirred; then all was still
Save the great raindrops dripping on the sill!

Again he chafed her hands, and with wild words
Pleaded in ears that heard not. "Speak to me,
"Mine own love!—dearest!" and the drops, like swords
Stabbing his heart, made answer, two and three.
"Emma!"—the hand, as if it sought her lord's,
Slipped from the pillow, clasping helplessly,
And the eyes opened, but they closed again,
As if to waken were too keen a pain!

"Jesu be praised, she lives!" On lip and cheek
The rosy life redawned with gradual glow,
As when, slow loitering on from peak to peak,
The morning mantles on the mountain snow.
Yet when again the sweet lips moved to speak,
Her voice but murmured like the wordless flow,
Word-like, of brooklet babbling round a thorn,
And mocked the syllables that died ere born.

At last a feeble hand, upraised with toil,
Made signal towards an ebon cabinet
With hinge of tendril-sprouting gold, a spoil
Of old Ravenna's palace, rough with fret
Of graver's art Byzantine. Nard and oil
On cedarn shelves in email caskets set
Gleamed half-revealed within, beside a row
Of ruby cordials and three cups below.

Fair in majestic impotence she leant
Back on the buttressed cushions, from her side
As speeding forth, her liegeman legate bent
To seek the drug she needed. Opening wide
Both doors he watched her eye for her intent,
And touched the vials one by one; he tried
One, two, and at the third she bowed—the horn
With it he brought her, carved in unicorn.

He poured and held it to her lips; she drank.
It seemed, I wot, such wine as in the cup

Of amorous Egypt glowed when on the bank
Of Nile she bade her Roman lord to sup.
And her eyes glistened,—all the ungracious blank
Gratefully beaming as she raised them up,
And blessed her lover with a smile more sweet
Than e'er touched lips of dying anchorete.

O Love, weird Alchemist of life, whose spell
Transmutes all hearts, all passions! Is it she
Who boasted but even now her might to fell
The pride of monarchs like a cedar-tree?
She, who but now in Beauty's right would quell
Her lovers with her loveliness and be
Mistress in all things of her own sweet will?
And can she sit there now so pale and still?

Even so! She sat there, and her true-love's arm
Circled her waist unchallenged as he spoke:
"How fares my lady now?" The silent charm
That sealed her sweet lips, at the question broke,

And "Cheerily," she answered, while the warm
Breath fell upon his forehead like the stroke
Of summer sunbeam in a beechwood glade
Among the dancing dapples of the shade.

"Now Heaven be praised for that fair word!" he said;
"You will be strong anon!" Then silence fell
Upon them like a mantle, and a dread
Grew up between them such as those may tell
Who have made shrift of love. The queenly head
Swayed like a fair lake-lily o'er the swell
And ebb of passionate breath. Unseen above
The vanquished Death yielded his sword to Love.

At last he spoke—trembling indeed, but slow,
As one long schooled with outward calm to speak,
Even when the blood ran boiling with the flow
Of fitfullest emotion. On his cheek
Burnt one small spot of crimson, but the brow
Was still with studied stillness. Ye might seek,

As many a crafty eye had sought ere then,
Nor find one passion there of common men.

" Emma," he said, " I am a plain poor man,
" And thou the daughter of a Kaiser's line,
" Whose slaves are princes, and whose realm earth's span!
" I have no sire save God and Father Rhine;
" I cannot prate of gold as others can:
" Crowns and broad lands and serfs are theirs, not mine!
" Blood, lordship, gold—without them and above
" I have a brain to do, a heart to love.

" And I have breasted all the storms of state,
" Endured the courtier's smile, the princeling's sneer,
" Breathed the rank air of courts, nor scorned to wait
" While others sat where I was more than peer.
" Yea, for thy love hath called me to this fate
" And dared me tempt the path that led me here,

" Though boldest heart might faint, and cheek wax pale
" To fathom that abyss, this height to scale !

" Thy love alone ! If for myself ere now
" I have done bravely that I willed to do,
" And wooed untimely furrows to my brow ;—
" If for myself I have been staunch and true
" To him I served and serve, and scorned to bow
" Though Prince and Pope defied us with their crew,
" Yet, when the glory crowned me and a name,
" Not for myself but thee I grasped at Fame !

" Laban, my lord, is thankless !—year on year
" I have toiled unrewarded. I have won
" Small praise and mickle blame—some love, more fear,
" And a scant pension, other guerdon none !
" Now I appeal from Laban ! Wilt thou hear,
" And crown thyself the deeds that I have done ?
" All, all for thee !—and more, if more thou wilt,
" Yet will I do, even be my heart's-blood spilt !

" O, year on year in dreams I have sought this hour,
" As Eve might seek some gate in Paradise,
" One narrow wicket, all unwatched by power
" Of cherub-swords! Full many a rare device
" Of cunning rhetoric, many an artful flower
" Of minstrel phrases eloquent and wise,
" Long since I gathered, might this hour once come:
" This hour! 'Tis here, and my full soul is dumb!

" Ah! where be now those fancies, and the love
" That once they might have spoken? Love hath grown
" Infinite in thy presence!—lost above
" All dizziest heights of love that loves alone!
" Emma, I love thee!"——But to speak nor move
She willed not. Like a maiden carved in stone,
Save for the panting passionate breath, she sat
As if she heard no voice, or cared not what.

" Speak, love," he cried, and with a start he flung
His arms about her, in love-thirsty eyes

Seeking the blessed answer which the tongue
Forgot to utter in that sweet surprise.
Ah me! for words what recked he, as she clung
Close, close about his neck, all witcheries
Of eloquence love-molten on her lips
In the first kiss of love's apocalypse?

A long, long kiss, unsealing all the springs
Of loving converse;—whispers low and sweet
And rich with memories of a thousand things
That spoke of old their secret, though it beat
Voiceless within their hearts;—soft murmurings
Of happy love, while oft the chattering sleet
On the wet stones would dash their lips with pale,
And other kisses link the broken tale.

So sat those lovers in the days of gold
With a new world beneath them and above!—
The old, old tale, which yet is never old
While maidens hear and young men tell of love.

From age to age interminably told
While strength and beauty bloom, and fond hearts move
To the glad music of the eternal truth
That breathes in blithe May-dawns and life's sweet youth!

Chant ye a marriage song, ye midnight gales!
Keep watch, thou sleepless elm beside the door,
That none disturb their slumber!—Blab no tales,
Thou taper flickering on the bridal floor!
Be still, ye voices from the cloistral vales,
Ye should have pealed of Holy Church before!
They sleep, those lovers, and your holy din
Will wake them all too soon from their sweet sin.

They slept and knew no dread. Yet ere the morn—
For dreams, too, have their consciousness, and prate
A truer tale of how the night hath worn
Than tolling clock to them that wake and wait,—
The Notary woke. A ghostly light forlorn
Gloamed through the latticed window's archway strait:

Snow?—snow? Could that be snow, that wind-scooped hill
That curved athwart the window on the sill?

And feet leave prints! He started up amain,
Like wreck-woke seaman, yet as one who knows
That Death in mockery still spares time to drain
One deep last beaker ere the whirlpools close,
Fondly he leant to kiss yet once again
His love's all-queenly forehead as he rose,
Deeming she slumbered, till a tell-tale smile
Lit on her mouth, and spoke the simple guile.

And her eyes dawned. "Ah, go not yet!" she cried,
"O, I have watched thee till mine eyes grew dim
"With very love to watch thee; and the tide
"Of fullest passion quivered at the brim!
"This is the height of life! Henceforth we slide
"Downward, for ever downward, till the grim
"Grave closes o'er us! Dearest, wilt thou go
"To woo so soon the darkness and the woe?

" The hours are young as yet : yon flickering light
" Hath scarce burnt half-way down, and far away
" The blushing dawn still lingers in her flight
" O'er the myrrh-groves of Araby. Ah, stay—
" Stay yet a little while ! A darker night
" Dawns all too soon upon us with the day !
" Farewell ? Thou canst not say that word ! Ah me,
" What shall I do, dear love, bereft of thee ? "

She flung her arms around him, with a low
Murmur between her kisses, as if there
She would have held his parting evermo,
Breathing her soul out in that sweet despair.
Alas, he heard not ! " Seest thou yonder snow ? "
He asked in barren answer to her prayer,
And rose. She thought he dreamed, so strange his cheer :
" Snow, and if snow it be, what cause for fear ? "

Softly he drew the bolt, unmade the door
For his despair to enter. All was white !

Day soon must dawn! How foot that treacherous floor,
Yet not proclaim the secret of the night?
Despair was on the threshold. "All is o'er!
"Insulted heaven itself forbids my flight!
"Vengeance alone awaiteth us! To fly
"Or stay what boots it?—either is to die!"—

The Princess stood beside him ere the words
Were halfway spoken:—one brief gaze she cast
On the white courtyard. "I will whet the swords
"That slay thee for this deed!" she said. "Make haste!
"On with your doublet! If yon sleuth-hound lords
"Shall scent where any foot save mine hath past
"From out this chamber,—say that woman's wit
"Failed woman's love, though that was ne'er said yet!—

"Art ready?—Quick!—Saint Denys speed our love!—
"Up!—On my shoulders!—Nay, no flattery now!—
"My limbs are not like theirs who scarce can move

"In harness for the tilt! What boots it how,
"So thou art safe? Look forth! Even now above
"Yon Eastern bastion daylight 'gins to plough
"The first grey furrows! Up!" And straight she bore
Her lover on her shoulders from the door!

I would have given now, were I a king,
To see that sight, a pension and broad lands,
Aye, half a shire, to watch his fingers cling
About her chin,—the long hair's liberal strands
Circling his wrists in many an amorous ring,
And the loose feet soft-stirruped in her hands!
Two lovers on one-pair of sandal-shoon
Between the rising sun and setting moon!

Ah me! the one who saw it was not one
Who joyed in seeing, though an Emperor!—
Whether some evil dream before the sun
Had snapped his sleep, or problem of deep lore
Of kingcraft and new empires lost and won

Called him thus early from the palace-door,
I know not! Past the elm-tree scarce a pace
She stood before her father, face to face!

All three were silent! silently, poor soul,
The Notary slid from his imperial seat,
Pale by the crimson Princess as a scroll
Of his own parchment, ere he gained his feet.
Too well he knew that clench of strong control
Under his monarch's beard! His own heart's beat
Was all he heard as the old man strode by
And gazed upon their shame inscrutably!

Whet the great axe, thou headsman, and build high
The scaffold, ye black ministers of doom,
Whereon an Empire's daughter is to die!
Hang thy broad streets, thou city, with the gloom
Of sable palls and funeral blazonry!
Meet vengeance for that crime, a traitor's tomb!

Shall bastard blood be mixed with blood of kings,
And taint the flow of princedom at the springs?

Grim sat the Monarch down among his peers:
" Bring forth the culprits!" Mercy! There they stood,
But not like culprits! Felon hopes and fears
Swayed not the tides of that imperial blood!
No quivering on the lips, no dastard tears,
No villain touch of shuddering cravenhood!
Love is akin to Death! At once to die
Is the true drift of many a true-love's sigh!

Then spoke the monarch: " Eginhard, my love
" For thee hath found its guerdon, and my trust
" Been paid right nobly! Thee I placed above
" Thy fellow-courtiers, raised thee from the dust
" And gave thee all my heart, that I might prove
" Even such return as this! O, 'tis most just!
" I am an old man, and my few grey hairs
" Had scarce enow of lighter toils and cares!

"And thou, too, daughter!" but the unwonted sneer
Died in his tremulous voice: "O God, my child!
"I have sinned deeply towards thee! O, too dear!
"I would have kept thee mateless, and beguiled
"Thy maiden-yearnings! my reward is here,
"Here, in a daughter's shame, a crown defiled!
"God's mercy on us both!" He paused awhile,
His frown unwrinkling to as dread a smile,

Then bending to the Notary: "You," he said,
"You have proclaimed me thankless! Monarch's ears
Hear whispers oftentimes that cost a head
"Even for their very truth. 'Tis true, the jeers
"Of these boy-Herods, and the bitter bread
"Of scorned desert among these pampered peers
"Too long have mocked thy service! Ere thou shrive
"To die thou yet shalt learn how kings can give!

"My Lord Archbishop!" From the astonied throng
The Pontiff rose full-purpled at the call:

" Join me these lovers ! Even now too long
" We have delayed the marriage festival !
" Take thy fair portress, Eginhard ! The wrong
" That thou hast done me I repay with all
" That an old man loved most ! and Christ above
" Bless ye, my children, in your life and love ! "

Sed peream, Christe, dignus si perditus iste !

Quoth Fabian.

61165

NICKAR THE SOULLESS.

WHERE by the marishes
Boometh the bittern,
Nickar the soulless One
Sits with his ghittern.
Sits inconsolable,
Friendless and foeless,
Wailing his destiny,
Nickar the soulless.

Footing the treacherous
Marish untrodden,
Glides by a Wanderer
Hooded in hodden;

Grey is his gaberdine,
Grey are his hosen:
Track that he travels by
No man had chosen.

"Wherefore thus sorrowful
"Sitt'st thou and sighest?
"Oft when it furthest seems,
"Succour is nighest."
"Friend," quoth the soulless One,
"Friend of the friendless,
"Vain are all comforters,
"Sorrow is endless!

"Mine, O to make her mine!
"Mine, and for ever!
"Why did I gaze on her?
"Mine she is never!
"Down by the river-aits
"Walked she at day-rise,

" Beautiful, bright as a
" Child of the Faeries;

" Kirtled right maidenly,
" Broidered her bodice,
" Belted with emeralds
" Fit for a Goddess,
" Came where the whispering
" Aspen leaves quiver,
" Just where the silver mere
" Spreads from the river,

" Came for a morning bath,
" Lovely and lonely,
" Ornan the swan-breasted,
" Ornan the only!
" Came, and the silken fret
" Deftly untwining,
" Let fall the golden locks,
" Ripple-like shining.

" Laid by her aumoner,
" Unclasped her brooches,
" Loosened her carcanet,
" Starry with ouches,
" Doffed the rich baudekin
" Broidered with myrtle,
" Unlooped the ruby knops
" Loosing her kirtle—

" Kirtle of cramoisie,
" Glist'ning with bezants,
" Samite the purfled sleeve,
" Slashed into crescents.
" Down from her girdlestead,
" Rustling and gleaming,
" Fall the rich webs and gold,
" Fountain-like streaming;

" Snow-white the corset is,
" Snow-white the camise;]

" Snow-white herself as the
" Swans of the Thamise.
" Beautiful, fair as the
" Swan when she stretches
" Wings and neck over her
" Nest in the sedges,

" Stands she in midst of her
" Jewels and vesture;
" O for the pride in her
" Maidenly gesture!
" O those blue eyne of hers,
" Glancing so keenly!
" O those fair limbs of hers,
" Fashioned so queenly!

" Down to the mere she steps,
" Where by the margent
" Brightly the morning-red
" Glints on the argent;

" Stands there a moment in
" Womanhood peerless,
" Then like a Mermaiden
" Plunges in fearless!

" Bright the hair follows her
" Swimming and plashing,
" Bright as the walk of light
" Sunsetward flashing;
" Ah, what a lunacy
" Thus to behold her,
" Watching the ripples kiss
" Softly her shoulder!

" Watching the snowy limbs
" Cleaving the waters,
" ' Is she indeed,' methought,
" ' One of earth's daughters?'
" Mine, O to make her mine,
" Mine and for ever!

"Why did I gaze on her?
"Mine she is never!"

"Tush!" quoth the Wanderer,
"Fondly thou sighest!
"Oft when it furthest seems,
"Succour is nighest!
"Had but the maiden thus
"Pledged me her clothing,
"She had not won them back
"Certes, for nothing!

"Would she have drowned herself,
"Think you, to spy you!
"Would her white arms have donned
"Swan-wings to fly you?
"Come, for a bargain, now,
"Such as I trade in!
"What wilt thou give an' I
"Grant thee the maiden?"

"Give?" quoth the soulless One,
"What should I give thee?
"Gift have I none, even
"Could I believe thee!
"None, save the ghittern here,
"Friend of my weeping,
"This, which the Mermaidens
"Gave me in keeping.

"Often men heark to its
"Harping impassioned,
"Little they reck the while
"Whence it was fashioned!
"Look you, how white it is,
"Polished and slender;
"Once a heart beat in it,
"Royally tender!

"'Tis the breast-bone of an
"Emperor's daughter,

"One whom a sister's hand
"Slew under water!
"Famous the history;
"Molten in metre,
"Long ere the Aser gods
"Fled before Peter.

"Look at the runes on it,
"Finger the strings, too!
"Sweeter its tone than aught
"Minstrel e'er sings to!"
"Pardon," quoth Evil-eye,
"Truly, no bungler
"Fashioned your ghittern, but
"I am no jongleur!

"Gift so imperial
"Seems me moreover,
"Guerdon too costly for
"Blessing a lover!

" Thee of thine only wealth
" Shame 'twere to rifle,
" All that I ask for is
" Just a mere trifle !

" Death shoots at human kind,
" Hits me or hits thee,
" Only just give me thy
" Soul when it quits thee !
" Tush ! A man's soul, my friend,
" Trust me, in fact is
" Great but in theory,
" Nothing in practice !

" Only souls hap to be
" That which I trade in ;
" Come, give me thine, my friend !
" Thine is the maiden !"
Nickar the soulless One,
Nickar the crafty,

Thrummed on his ghittern-strings,
Inwardly laughed he!

"Say, if I barter it,
"Thou, canst thou take it?
"Ill were a covenant
"Made but to break it.
"Look you, this soul of mine
"Clings so about me,
"He is not born that can
"Drag it without me!

"Trust me, so straitly the
"Life-blood hath tied us,
"Death the Divider's self
"Cannot divide us!"
"Aye?" quoth the Wanderer,
"Is it so fast in?
"Haply 'twill loose in the
"Grave thou art cast in.

"I, I can sever it
"Ev'n were it faster;
"In my own handicraft,
"Trust me, I'm master.
"Come, now, to please thee, I'll
"Bargain, my brother,
"If I don't take it, to
"Find thee another.

"If I should fail in it,
"Will I, or nill I,
"Yours is another soul
"Clean as a lily!"
Nickar the soulless One,
Nickar the crafty,
Thrummed on his ghittern-strings,
Inwardly laughed he!

"If to a covenant,"
Then quoth the Dark One,

"Name you've not learnt to sign,
"Still you can mark one.
"Pardon!" He lifted the
Hand of the singer,
Swift with a needle-point
Pricked he his finger!

Nickar the parchment-scroll
Lifted unshudd'ring;—
Handed it back to him
Marked with a blood-ring.
Peal the bells merrily,
Ringers of Thrifholm!
Nickar the soulless One
Bringeth a wife home!

Ornan the swan-breasted,
Ornan the wader,—
Bring forth the bridal-dress,
Girls, that ye made her!

'Anlaf the Bishop his
Blessing delivers,
Nickar the soulless One
Blanches and shivers!

Swiftly the winter flies,
Springtide and summer,
White are the cradle-swathes
For the new comer!
Toll the bell solemnly,
Ringers of Thrifholm!
Nickar the soulless One
Beareth his wife home!

Cold in the God's-acre
Sadly he lays his
Bride and her little one
Under the daisies!
Where by the marishes
Boometh the bittern,

Nickar the soulless One
Sits with his ghittern :—

Sits inconsolable,
Friendless and foeless,
Wailing his destiny,
Nickar the soulless.
Footing the treacherous
Marish untrodden,
Glides by a Wanderer
Hooded in hodden.

Grey is his gaberdine,
Grey are his hosen,
Track that he travels by
No man had chosen.
"Wherefore thus sorrowful
"Sitt's thou, forlorn One?
"Did not I win for thee
"Swan-breasted Ornan?"

Nickar the soulless One
Speaks without turning:—
"Wherefore? Thou knowest well
"Whom I am mourning!
"Yet what myself am, thou
"Seemest to know less:—
"Look on me! Recognize
"Nickar the soulless!"

Fiercely the Wanderer
Glares on the speaker:—
"Fool that I was, to be
"Fooled by a Nickar!"
Where by the marishes
Boometh the bittern,
Nickar the soulless One
Sinks with his ghittern!

Drowned in the marishes,
Grey-Hood beside him;

Where is the soul that he
Vowed to provide him?
Forth to the green-sodded
Wilds of Ierne,
Shiplessly, steedlessly
Takes he his journey.

Straight to the Holy Lough
Derg, where the hoary
Patric the bishop still
Dwells in his glory;
Dwells in the cavernous
Islet, to mortals
Where the dread Spirit-world
Opens his portals.

There the red Hell-river
Bellows and hisses,
Plunging in flame to the
Shrieking abysses.

There on the brink of the
Dolorous river,
Smoke Purgatorial
Rises for ever:—

There with a glow, as of
Gold in the coppel,
Glimmers Earth-paradise
Girdled with opal.
There at the gates of the
Weird spirit-haven,
Crosiered St. Patric stands,
Old as a raven.

Speaks the grey Wanderer,
"Tell me, O Warden,
"What shall I give for a
"Soul from thy garden?"
Keenly the hoary Saint
Eyes the grey pedlar:

" Fiend, thou wast ever an
" Impudent meddler!

" Off! ere I ban thee with
" Bell, book, and candle,
" Home for thy taskmaster
" Moloch to handle!"
Quaking, the Wanderer
Kneels interceding:
" Mercy, O mighty One,
" Hark to my pleading!

" Not for myself, O saint,
" Ask I the favour,
" Once in my life I'm not
" Slayer, but saver!
" Nickar, the soulless One,
" Pitiful Pixie,
" Foully hath won of me
" Wager too tricksy!

"I, who but struck it to
"Humour his follies,
"Wagered no less than a
"Soul to the soulless!
"Wagered and lost it!—Ah,
"Saint, if thou aid not,
"Think of my doom for the
"Wager that's paid not!

"Sure thou canst find him a
"Soul to inherit?
"Any will do for him,
"So 'tis a spirit!
"Just a mere idiot's,
"Say, or a baby's?
"Either would suit for him,
"Grossest of gabies!

"What? In the Limbo, there,
"Out of the many

"Unbaptized little ones,
"Hast thou not any?
"Pity that all of them
"Thus should be wasted!
"Surely at least by one
"Bliss may be tasted?

"See! Here's a Prodigal's
"Spirit I'll cede thee;
"Damned is it evermore,
"Elsewise, I rede thee!
"Look you!" He draws forth the
Soul from his pocket,
Flimsily tied, with its
Date on a docket;

Smooths out its gossamer
Inwardly muttering;
Holds it up chapmanlike,
Temptingly fluttering,

"Fiend!" quoth the Saint, "not oft
"Art thou caught sleeping!
"Give me thy Prodigal's
"Soul to my keeping,

"Since for him, dreeing the
"Dole of Purgation,
"Prayer may avail even
"Yet to salvation.
"Spirit for Spirit's not
"Mine to return thee;
"Nathless one favour thy
"Pleading shall earn thee!

"Ornan the Beautiful
"Here still abideth,
"Till the dread Hand her soul
"Heavenward guideth;
"Here, too, her little one
"Wanders for ever,

"Like as his father wont,
"Down by the river.

"Fiend, when the Beautiful
"Winneth to glory,
"With her the child shall go
"Bearing thy story;
"He, who fain heavenward
"All men would gather,
"Haply shall take the Child
"In for the Father!"

Ex nihilo nil fit: Sathanas ut perderet, emit;
Perdere cùm voluit, perdidit at noluit.

quoth Fabian.

THE FIFTEEN DAYS OF JUDGMENT.

"THEN there shall be signs in Heaven."—
Thus much in the text is given,
Worthy of the sinner's heeding:
But the other signs preceding
Earth's Last Judgment and destruction,
And its fiery reconstruction,
May be drawn from other channels;
For we read in Hebrew annals
That there shall be altogether
Fifteen Judgment days; but whether
Following or interpolated,
Jerome saith, is nowhere stated.

Day I.

On the first day, loud upcrashing,
Shall the shoreless ocean, gnashing
With a dismal anaclysmal
Outrush from its deeps abysmal,
Lifted high by dread supernal,
Storm the mountain heights eternal!
Forty cubits of sheer edges,
Wall-like, o'er the summit-ridges
Stretching upright forth—a mirror
For the unutterable terror
Of the huddled howling nations,
Smit with sudden desolations,
Rushing hither, thither, drunken,
Half their pleasant realms sea-sunken!

Day II.

On the second day, down-pouring,
Shall the watery walls drop roaring

From the ruinous precipices
To the nethermost abysses,
With a horrible waterquaking
In the world-wide cataracts, shaking
Earth's foundations as they thunder
To the cavernous darkness under.—
Surf-plumed steeds of God Almighty,
Rock and pyramid, forest, city,
Through the flood-rent valleys scourging,
Wild in headlong ebb down-surging,
Down, till eye of man scarce reaches
Where, within its shrunken beaches,
Hidden from a world's amazement,
Cowers the Deep in self-abasement.

DAY III.

On the third day, o'er the seething
O' the leprous ocean writhing,
Whale and dragon, orc and kraken,
And leviathan, forsaken

His unfathomable eyrie,
To and fro shall plunge—the dreary
Dumb death-sickness of creation
Startling with their ululation.
Men shall hear the monsters bellow
Forth their burden, as they wallow;
But its drift?—Let none demand it!
God alone shall understand it!

DAY IV.

On the fourth day, blazing redly,
With a reek pitch-black and deadly,
A consuming flame shall quiver
From all seas and every river!
Every brook and beck and torrent
Leaping in a fiery current;
All the moats and meres and fountains
Lit, like beacons on the mountains;
Furnace-roar of smolten surges
Scaring earth's extremest verges!

Day V.

On the fifth day, Judgment-stricken,
Every green herb, from the lichen
To the cedar of the forest,
Shall sweat blood in anguish sorest!
On the same, all fowls of heaven
Into one wide field, fear-driven,
Shall assemble, cowed and shrinking,
Neither eating aught, nor drinking;
Kind with kind, all ranked by feather,
Doves with doves aghast together,
Swan with swan in downfal regal,
Wren with wren, with eagle, eagle!
Ah! when fowl feel such foreboding,
What shall be the Sinner's goading?

Day VI.

On the sixth day, through all nations
Shall be quaking of foundations,

With a horrible hollow rumbling—
All that all men builded crumbling
As the heel of Judgment tramples
Cot and palace, castles, temples,
Hall and minster, thorp and city ;—
All men too aghast for pity
In the crashing and the crushing
Of that stony stream's downrushing !—
And a flame of fiery warning
Forth from sundown until morning
With a lurid coruscation
Shall reveal night's desolation !

DAY VII.

On the seventh day, self-shattered,
Rifting fourfold, scarred and scattered,
Pounded in the Judgment's mortars,
Every stone shall split in quarters !
Pebble, whinstone, granite sparry,
Rock and boulder—stones of quarry,

Shaped or shapeless, all asunder
Shivering, split athwart and under;
And the splinters, each on other,
Shall make war against his brother,
Each one grinding each to powder,
Grinding, gnashing, loud and louder,
Grinding, gnashing on till even,
With a dolorous plea to Heaven.
What the drift?—Let none demand it!
God alone shall understand it!

Day VIII.

On the eighth, in dire commotion,
Shall the dry land heave like Ocean,
Puffed in hills and sucked in hollows,
Yawning into steep-down swallows—
Swelling, mountainously lifted,
Skyward from the plains uprifted—
With a universal clamour,
Rattling, roaring through the tremor;

While, flung headlong, all men living
Grovel in a wild misgiving!—
What, O Sinner, shall avail your
Might in solid Earth's own failure?

DAY IX.

On the ninth day all the mountains
Shall drop bodily, like spent fountains,
All the cloud-capped pride of pristine
Peak and pinnacle amethystine
Toppling, drifting to the level,
Flooding all the dales with gravel;
One consummate moment blasting
All that seems so everlasting—
All men to the caves for shelter
Scurrying through the world-wide welter!

DAY X.

On the tenth day, hither, thither,
Herding from their holes together,

With a glaring of white faces,
Through the desolate wildernesses
Men shall o'er that mountain ruin
Run as from a Death's pursuing,—
Each one with suspicious scowling,
Shrinking from his fellow's howling—
For all human speech confounded
Shall not sound as once it sounded.
None shall understand his brother—
Mother child, nor child his mother!

DAY XI.

On the eleventh day, at dawning,
Every sepulchre wide yawning
At the approach of Earth's Assessor,
Shall upyield its white possessor;—
All the skeletons, close-serried,
O'er the graves where each lay buried,
Mute upstanding, white and bony,
With a dreadful ceremony

Staring from the morn till gloaming
Eastward for the Judge's coming;
Staring on, with sockets eyeless,
Each one motionless and cryless,
Save the dry, dead-leaf-like chattering,
Through that white-branched forest pattering.
What its drift?—Let none demand it!
God alone shall understand it!

DAY XII.

On the twelfth, the Planets seven
And all stars shall drop from Heaven!
On the same day, scared and trembling,
All four-footed things assembling,
Each after his kind in order—
All the lions in one border,
Sheep with sheep—not needing shepherd—
Stag with stag—with leopard, leopard—
Shall be herded cowed and shrinking,
Neither eating aught, nor drinking,

But to Godward bellowing, shrieking,
Howling, barking, roaring, squeaking ;—
What the drift ?—Let none demand it !
God alone shall understand it !

DAY XIII.

On the thirteenth awful morning
Shall go forth the latest warning,
With a close to all things mortal,
For the Judge is at the portal !
In an agony superhuman,
Every living man and woman,
Child and dotard—every breather—
Shall lie down and die together,
That all flesh in death's subjection
May abide the Resurrection !

DAY XIV.

On the fourteenth, morn to even,
Fire shall feed on Earth and Heaven,

Through the skies and all they cover,
Under earth, and on, and over;
All things ghostly, human, bestial,
In the crucible celestial
Tested by the dread purgation
Of that final conflagration;
Till the intolerable whiteness
Dawn, of God's exceeding brightness
Through the furnace-flame's erasure
Of yon mortal veil of azure!

DAY XV.

Last, the fifteenth day shall render
Earth a more than earthly splendour,
Once again shall Word be given:
"Let there be new Earth, new Heaven!"
And this fleeting world—this charnel,
Purified, shall wax eternal!—
Then all souls shall Michael gather
At the footstool of the Father,

Summoning from Earth's four corners,
All erst human saints ; and scorners,
And without revenge or pity
Weigh them in the scales almighty !—

Sinner ! Dost thou dread that trial ?
Mark yon shadow on the dial !

Ast illi semper modò "cras, cras," umbra docebit.

EXPLICIT.

POEMS.

HARVEST HOME.

"THE boughs do swing, and the bells do ring,
"As we merrily home the harvest bring."
Gay with ribbons and with roses,
Twisted straws and cornfield posies,
Four grey horses, sleek and strong,
Bear the harvest-wain along;
While the lime-trees, as it rolls,
Snatch aloft the golden tolls
Immemorially due
To their cloistral avenue.
See, upon the top of it
Crowned with boughs the reapers sit,
And hark, what is the song they sing?

"The boughs do swing, and the bells do ring,
"As we merrily home the harvest bring."

In the wake, too, as it passes,
Sunburnt mothers, lads and lasses,
Some with poppies on their brows,
Swinging bonnets, swinging boughs,
March behind in idle order
With the shepherd's dog as warder;
Singing some, with measured pace,
Treble to the reapers' bass,
While the chime keeps company
From the dovecot belfry nigh,
Mingling with the song below,
High and low and high and low:
"The boughs do swing, and the bells do ring,
"As we merrily home the harvest bring."

See, the waggon stops its sailing
By the farmer's garden paling,

And the troop in order stand
By the porch on either hand,
Till the gaffer to the door,
With his dame and grandsons four,
Comes to greet them, while a maiden
With the horns and beer-jug laden
Stands behind the household ring
As the crowd in chorus sing :—

" Now God bless our good master
" For many a year to come,
" To plough and sow and reap and mow,
" And bring the harvest home !
" To bring the harvest home, good man,
" And happy may he be !
" We've ploughed, we've sown—we've reap'd, we've mown,
" And we bring it merrily,
" We bring the harvest home !
" Home, home ! The harvest home !
" The harvest home !—Huzza !

"And God bless our good mistress,
"Her children all and some,
"To plough and sow and reap and mow,
"And bring the harvest home!
"To bring the harvest home, good dame,
"With all her family!
"We've ploughed, we've sown—we've reap'd, we've mown,
"And we bring it merrily,
"We bring the harvest home!
"Home, home! The harvest home!
"The harvest home!—Huzza!"

Like a barque from Eldorado
Seeking the spice-islands' shadow,
On it sails, the shouting over,
To its brother ricks of clover
In the yard beyond the gate,
There to yield its golden freight
While the thirsty troopers press
Round the beer-jug sorceress.

Since, besides, the bustling mother
One jug empty, brings another,
Poaching Dick with his one arm
Thinks a draught will do no harm,
Though his claim be somewhat slender,
Save that now, while birds are tender,
He's netted since they've done the reaping
Five fat brace while folks were sleeping.

See, among the unwashen topers
Throng a score of interlopers
Gay in Sunday-best and more!
Never, surely, Katie wore
Hat like that in holy place!
Never, surely, Katie's face
Beamed as now on Sabbath morning
With so wicked an adorning
From the rose that blooms so late
On the trellis o'er the gate!

Come, be off, you tippling idlers!
Dick, you rascal, call the fiddlers!
Clear the green, and let's be doing,
We're baking while we should be brewing!
Ha, the Queen!—the Harvest Queen!
Crowned right royally I ween
With the simple wheaten ears
Walking there among her peers;
Nor less royally, in sooth,
Crowned with beauty, grace, and youth:
Frank and fair from head to foot,
Rippled tress to brass-holed boot,
Wearing just the form and favour
Health and honest Nature gave her;
Not too small of hand or waist,
Undisfigured, undisgraced;
Meet in a free land to be
Wife and mother of the free:
Queen in presence and in motion,
Claiming loyallest devotion

From her lieges, great and small;
Queen in all things and to all.
Yet, methinks, beneath the state,
They may see who watch and wait,
Something in her face and mien
Of kindlier stuff than makes a queen—
A glance, at times a thought too soft—
A fall of eyes that meet too oft—
What, Katie, jealous?—Come, remember
She marries Ned ere next September,
And then—who knows? Come, spare your frown!
What? "don't care fivepence for the crown?
It is not that they've made her Queen—
Only she looks"—Ah, well, I ween
These harvest lads and lasses here
Will serve a humbler Queen next year!

Now, Ned, where are you, lad? We're waiting
While you stand there with Grannam prating!
Bow to the Queen and lead her up!

You'll scarce dance down before we sup!
So! Mark him where he comes! A fellow
To make small courtiers' blood run yellow:
Walking there without a coat,
Nothing more about his throat
Than a knot without a bow
Round the collar's crumpled snow.
Just a streak of crimson thread
Bound about the cropt black head,
Rough and round and resolute,
Curled like polished ebony-root:
Thewed like Adam, with a stride
Proud, yet with a noble pride—
Pride that hateth, scorneth no man:
Just, in truth, a brave young yeoman.

He bows:—A prince might ape that air,
Half stately, half familiar,
With which at top he takes his stand;
Still proud, with queenship hand in hand,

And looks down on the bachelors
Like Saul among his warriors.

He claps his hands. Now, twanging, braying,
You tuning fiddlers, fall to playing!
Scrape it, fiddlers! foot it, dancers!
See how heel to fiddle answers!
Foot it, shuffling, shifting places
Down the avenue of faces:
Shifting, shuffling, in and out,
Up and down and round about;
Whirling skirts and ribbons streaming,
Neat-laced ankles trimly gleaming,
Corduroys all shaking, reeling,
Hobnailed boot-soles toeing, heeling,
Stamping, shuffling all in line,
Treading out the tune like wine.
Foot it, foot it! Shake your leather!
Foot it featly down together!

Look you here, how little Lizzie,
All her curly pate dance-dizzy,
Hides it in her pinafore
As she dances at the door,
Dances to herself and sings,
Clapping chubby arms for wings.

Look, too, even the elders watching
Find the dancers' frenzy catching :
With her sticks, see, Master's mother
Rests on one,—beats time with t'other,
While the Grand-dad, standing by her,
Warming with his boyhood's fire,
Steps aside to little Liz,
Takes her chubby hand in his,
Four with fourscore hand in hand,
Briskly joins the dancing band,
And, though Curly-pate looks gravely,
Makes believe to foot it bravely.

What's that, Gaffer?—Supper ready?
Wait awhile, we're not so greedy!
Let the old folk get them seated;
We've not done, we're hardly heated!
Faster, fiddlers!—Dancers, faster!—
One more round, then follow Master!
So, to supper! "House" or kitchen
Finds a seat for all and each in:
Yet stand awhile: the feast can spare
One little resting-place for prayer,
While the Vicar, grave and portly,
Asks a blessing,—not too shortly,
On the harvest and the house,
Him that reaps, and him that ploughs,
Him that stores the golden yield,
And him whose sheaf is left afield,
That he at home may envy not
His niggard neighbour's wealthier lot;
On the farm and on the feast,
On the host and on the guest.

Now be seated! Master's carving
Makes believe his guests are starving,
Though all that yard and field afford
Find a dish upon the board,
All that Plenty can procure
For the village epicure,
Beef and bacon, eggs and cheese,
Creams, the Queen's own master-piece,
Cakes and cates, and junkets rare,
Meet for feasting bishops' fare:
All the more to village taste,
That 'tis plenty without waste.

What a clatter, what a chatter,
What a clap of plate and platter,
While the Vicar talks of cows,
Superphosphates and steam-ploughs,
To a neighbour's wife, who feeds:
Words she likes, but she loves deeds.

But amid the din below
Talk, I ween, hath ruddier glow,
Where the gossips hint their tales
Of Tom and Bess, and Dick and Aylse,
While, further down, the ham provokes
Five village wits to launch two jokes.

"Welcome! God speed the plough and flail!"
The Gaffer starts the sops and ale;
A brown toast-island in the cup
Afloat among pricked crabs at top;
Launched in the tankard's gulf profound,
From lip to lip the toast goes round:
Look, not a dame will shirk her draught,
But quaff it deep as Gaffer quaffed!
Aye, even the Queen right frankly dips
Among the crabs her dainty lips.
So,—queenly heart shall never fail!
God speed the plough! God speed the flail!

Ha, who comes here? 'Tis red-head Johnnie
Says he's brought the Vicar's pony.
Well! even harvest-feasting passes!
We and Time have empty glasses!
Good-night!—Good-bye!—Yet, ere we go,
Let's peep into the door below,
Where fiddler Sam among the smoke
Is singing when he does not choke,
And when he falters in the middle
Ekes out the tune upon his fiddle;
Till poaching Dick, who grows uneasy
To listen to a pipe so wheezy,
Takes up the stave an octave lower,
And shakes the rafters with his roar:

"Says Tom, 'Good day, you proper young men,
"'What makes you to fight so?
"'And come you along with me, young maid,
"'For I think it is time to go.'"

Good-night once more! Look, broad and low,
The moon with harvest-fire aglow
Sheds quiet over field and tree,
And all sleeps, save the bats and we.
Time is swift, and youth grows old!
Let us grasp the days of gold!
Say thou Poet, say thou Sage,
Is not this the golden age?
Not behind us, not before us!
Even now 'tis shining o'er us!
'Mid the stir of Old and New,
'Mid the strife of False and True,
Mother Nature, still the same,
Faithful to the eternal aim,
Every year renews the prime
Of the golden olden time!

A PROUD BEAUTY.

I AM fair, you say, in the morning,
Cantering over the heath:
Fair at night in ball-room adorning,
Satin and ribbons and wreath.

O, of course! You could kneel to my slipper,
Kiss the print of my heel in the dirt:
Be delighted to murder the snipper
Who measures my waist for a skirt!

Yes, I'm fair; but, I thank you, my mirror
Can speak more justly than you.
Your praise of my beauty's an error:
That tells me I'm fair, but is true!

'Tis true,—I am fair, and you feel it;
I have eyes; I know what I know.
Am I under an oath to conceal it?
Am I sinner so foul if I show?

Yes! Puppy and pedant and poet
Might pardon the beauty, and grin.
'Tis not to be fair, but to know it,
That—that is the pardonless sin!

Venus on Titian's easel—
Helen in Homer's song—
Psyche from Gibson's chisel,
And I—we are all in the wrong!

I am proud, you whisper;—So be it!
Let the hard word stand!—I am proud!
Am I to blush if you see it,
You,—and the rest of the crowd?

You,—of course you cannot mistake me,
Who know us women so well!

What I am, is of course what you make me!
I am proud, as you all can tell!

I am proud! 'Twere in vain for a Mister,
You simper, to sue my accord:
Plain Esquire might suit for my sister,
But I—I am mate for my lord.

Well, I thank you, you read me so truly!
My lord, too, is quite of your mind.
I hear he's been furnishing newly;
A Countess no doubt is behind.

Yes! Beauty in royallest blossom
Heaven shaped expressly for him,
Such a judge of the swell of a bosom,
The curve of a delicate limb!

Well, at times pride suffers a stumble
Even from gazing so high.
I am proud: for once I'll be humble—
I deign to tell you, you lie!

Let me speak! You see me, a woman-
Lovely, with eyes to compare.
Think you I ceased to be human
So soon as I felt I was fair?

Have I nought in my heart but ambition?
No blood? not a passion to move?
Do I yearn for a park and position,
Yet never feel hungry for love?

Speak! Where is your red-headed scullion
One whit more woman than I?
The title and rent-roll and bullion—
Can they stifle the heart's wild cry?

Coward! You feel you're unworthy
Of beauty peerless as mine,
So you feign that my passion is earthy,
And yours—yours of course is divine!

The old tale!—You have lost in your running,
And whine that the judgment is wrong!

Mother Nature, you find, is too cunning:
She fashions the fair for the strong.

Doubtless, you feel it acutely,
To be weak, I grant you, is hard;
But might you not suffer it mutely?
I neither made you nor marred.

Could you love half so well as you tell us,
You'd be first to be proud of my pride;
Too proud—far too proud to be jealous,
Though a king babbled love by my side.

Go! I remit you your duty!
My lieges at least shall be true.
I treasure my pride and my beauty
Not for my lord—nor for you.

MIDSUMMER EVE.

FEAST of Saint John, ah, where the faery train
Who wont of old on this thy hallowed Eve
In trim array their twilight dance to weave
In forest nooks, unseen of eyes profane?
Ay me, Titania wakes not, and the strain
Of Pixy songs is still! Dost thou not grieve,
Grey Festival, that felon Time should leave
Thy brooks and woods unhaunted e'er again?
O mourn, but not for them! The Ithuriel flash
That scathed their sheen, still spares the baser creed
Where elder faith heard elfin timbrels clash,
And fays' shrill pipings echo through the mead,
There the new gospel's calculating greed
Eyes the broad oaks, and hears the chink of cash

VOICES.

OUR star shines out in the West,
And a mist floats up from the sea,
Floats up by the brook while the wind is still
In the leaves of the linden tree.
All still as we sit in the still moonshine
In the bracken up to the knee,
Save the beat of a heart that beats to mine,
And the beat of a heart that beats to thine,
Dear love!
A heart that beats to thine.

A voice goes down with the brook,
And a voice comes up from the shore,
But they whisper a sweeter tale to-night
Than ever they whispered before:
They have wept and sighed, but never like this
Were the sighs and the tears of yore,
For they weep, but the tears are the tears of bliss:—
They sigh,—'tis the sigh in a lover's kiss,
Dear love!
The sigh in a lover's kiss.

THE WINTER MORN.

HEIGH-HO, the sorrow and the snow,
And a true true love forlorn!
O wearily I go o'er the weary weary snow,
In the weary, weary winter morn!
Tramping, tramping, whither shall I go?—
Tramping, tramping, weary-foot and worn?
For O, and for O, in the darkness and the snow,
O well the wind may blow, and O well the tear may flow
For a true true love forlorn!

THE BANNERS.

LORDLY Banners, waving to the stars,
Flap upon the nightwind, heavy with the dew :—
Trustful Youth is wending to the wars,
Strong in Ancient faith to battle with the New.

Lordly banners, trodden in the clay,
Lie upon the mountain, dank with other dew :
Hapless Youth hath lost the bloody day :
Ancient faith is feeble,—stronger is the New.

Lordly banners, other than of yore,
Flap upon the night-wind, heavy with the dew :
Youth to battle girdeth him once more,
New and Old are feeble,—mighty is the True !

BY THE SEA.

SWEET day, thy beauty doth unseal all springs
Of pure delight, where even Despair might slake
Awhile his infinite thirsting, and partake
In the deep gladness of all outward things.
Yea, Sea and Autumn sit like crowned kings
Over the revels of the world, and make
Awful rejoicing to the Lord!—Break, break,
Thou prison-silence in the silver strings,
And blossom into song! O day of days,
Dying among the stars in breathless calm,
With thine own tribute to the eternal psalm
From Nature's heart outwelling evermore,
With all sweet voices of the waves and shore
Give thou to God one hymn of human praise!

ROUGE ET NOIR.

You there, looking so demure at
Yonder lily-fisted curate,
And the other there, his brother,
In his spurs and knightly red:
Marvel you how e'er your sister
Kissed the Parson when he kissed her?
Or how Fanny can sit rapt in
Loving converse with the Captain?
How one care of such a pair of——
Enters into maiden's head?

Come, methinks you're somewhat bitter,
My fair cynic crochet-knitter:

If you like a chat, let's strike a
Fairer balance if we can.
Yonder dandy little cleric,
Mediæval-neoteric,
Yonder Horseguards' ultimatum,
Lisp and giggle and pomatum,
Weigh them, flay them, bray them, slay them,
Still you'll find them each a man!

'Tis a something nobler, surely,
Which those damsels love so purely,
Than the waistcoat or the laced coat,
Priestly black or knightly red.
Beams there, then, no light supernal,
Lode-star of a love eternal,
Evermore in each vocation,
To excuse the adoration
Which discovers in their lovers
All of great in hand or head?

Yes! The Soldier and the Preacher,
That the guardian, this the teacher,
Own a title true and vital
To a heart's-love infinite!
Clothe us how you will, we're human:
God hath made us man and woman.
Rightly then, shall help-mate tender
Love her guider and defender,
And by rule of Nature's true-love
Still adore the Priest and Knight!

Lo you there, at Eden's portals
Stand the grand primeval mortals,
Man and woman, merely human
In the lore of Good and Ill!
Yet, though fallen both, and banished,
All their garden-glory vanished,
Knight, by Cherub-swords appointed,
Priest, by Seraph-tears anointed,

Still the woman loves the true man,
Knight and Priest she loves him still!

Or, so please you, turn the pages
Of the great world's coming ages
To the latest and the greatest:
Look adown the years, and see
Where, beyond the days of mitres,
Where, beyond the days of fighters,
Priest of white self-sacrifices,
Warrior with his wants and vices,
Still the woman loves the true man
With the grander love to be!

Aye, and in the baser real
Still she clings to this ideal:
Else I wonder much how yonder
Pair could e'er have won them wives!
Yet 'twere ill to pass them blindly;
Let us rather own them kindly

As the types of nobler orders,
Nobler preachers, nobler sworders,
Even though nothing but their clothing
Tell the meaning of their lives!

Is the lore not worth the learning
Taught by yonder love-lamp burning
Pure and holy on the lowly
Altar of a sister's breast?
You, no doubt, are wiser, older,
And perhaps a trifle colder,
Yet whate'er the outer cover
Of your own sublimer lover,
Baser, nobler, king or cobbler,
All you love is Knight or Priest!

SHADOWS.

LONELY o'er the dying ember
I the past recal,
And remember in December
April buds and August skies,
As the shadows fall and rise,
As the shadows rise and fall.

Quicker now they flit and flicker
On the dreary wall;
Aye, and quicker still, and thicker
Throng the fitful fantasies,
As the shadows fall and rise,
As the shadows rise and fall.

Dimmer now they shoot and shimmer
On the dreary wall.
Dimmer, dimmer, still they glimmer
Till the light in darkness dies,
And the other shadows rise,
And the other shadows fall.

THE SEVEN FIDDLERS.

A BLUE robe on their shoulder,
And an ivory bow in hand,
Seven fiddlers came with their fiddles
A-fiddling through the land,
And they fiddled a tune on their fiddles
That none could understand.

For none who heard their fiddling
Might keep his ten toes still,
E'en the cripple threw down his crutches,
And danced against his will:
Young and old they all fell a-dancing,
While the fiddlers fiddled their fill.

They fiddled down to the ferry—
The ferry by Severn-side,
And they stept aboard the ferry,
None else to row or guide,
And deftly steered the pilot,
And stoutly the oars they plied.

Then suddenly in mid-channel
These fiddlers ceased to row,
And the pilot spake to his fellows
In a tongue that none may know:
"Let us home to our fathers and brothers,
And the maidens we love below."

Then the fiddlers seized their fiddles,
And sang to their fiddles a song:
"We are coming, coming, O brothers,
"To the home we have left so long,
"For the world still loves the fiddler,
"And the fiddler's tune is strong."

Then they stept from out the ferry
Into the Severn-sea;
Down into the depths of the waters
Where the homes of the fiddlers be,
And the ferry-boat drifted slowly
Forth to the ocean free!

But where those jolly fiddlers
Walked down into the deep,
The ripples are never quiet,
But for ever dance and leap,
Though the Severn-sea be silent,
And the winds be all asleep.

SONG.

I LOOK into the eyes I love
And watch the old love beaming,
And call from out the buried years
The old, old lover's dreaming.

Just here and there one line of grey
Divides the raven tresses,
I sigh :—Youth fades apace—I smile,
The love that blest, still blesses!

AMERICA.

I.

I saw two Curses in the blood of men
Laving their hoary loathliness. A fen
Choked with unburied corpses steamed before their den.

One bare aloft the Sword, and one the Scourge.
Four spotted things laughed a hyena-dirge
As their grim monarchs waded through the gory surge.

Blood evermore oozed in from North and South.
And ever as they laved, a ghastlier youth
Slid through their ghastly Eld, and slaked its hideous drouth.

And WAR lay down and lapped a loathly draught,
Rolling his eyes half drunkenly, and laughed:
"Not yet thy hand nor mine forgets its wonted craft!

"Thousand on thousand blood-recorded years,
"Have thou and I battened on blood and tears,
"Sworn fellows, cheek by jowl—Hell's eldest born twin-
peers.

"Yet in thy perilous hour, when waked by thee
"I rose to shield thy realm against the Free,
"E'en yet men dream that WAR shall SLAVERY'S dooms-
man be."

And SLAVERY howled: "Not yet, not yet we die!
"Thou art my Saviour, and thy Saviour I!—
"Brother, thy fall shall herald that mine own draws
nigh!"

II.

And other Two I saw who walked the sea :—
One bare an Olive-bough and one a Key :
White-robed, white-winged, they walked the waters mournfully.

And PEACE said, " Look—yon fair far-stretching land
" Hath sworn by all the blood upon her hand,
" That SLAVERY evermore her corner-stone shall stand.

" Dost thou not tremble ?" FREEDOM answered : " No !
" But go thou first—and wheresoe'er thou go
" Surely I too shall follow though my steps be slow !

" For in my dreams,—yea, and my dreams come true,
" God gave me empire over Old and New :—
" I wait—Hereafter, mine are all beneath the blue !"

Der Tod als Freund.

A TRANSLATION OF THE PICTURE BY ALFRED RETHEL.

PATER NOSTER, QUI ES IN CŒLIS.

——Is the sun shining? I thought he set
An hour ago:—but I forget:
And I seem to feel from over the hill
The red glow bathing my forehead still.

SANCTIFICETUR NOMEN TUUM.

Very quiet it seems to-night,
Very quiet to left and right,
And I know full well, though I cannot see,
How the calmness falls over meadow and tree,

And the carven pinnacles clear and high,
How still they stand in the quiet sky.

ADVENIAT REGNUM TUUM.

I feel like a sick man praising God,
When his fever is spent, and he walks abroad,
And the peace that flows from all peaceful things
Wells fresh in the worn heart's shrunken springs,
Till his eyes o'erflow, and the world grows dim,
And he hushes the chords of his own weak hymn
To join in the silent psalmody
Floating up from the brooks, and fields, and sky,
To the great good God, pouring down from above
Such wealth of glory, and peace, and love.

FIAT VOLUNTAS TUA,

Yea, very quiet it seems to-night,
Very quiet to left and right.
Very quiet and very sweet!
I would die to-night if God thought meet!

SICUT IN CŒLO, ITA IN TERRA.

Did I read it to-night, or long ago,
Of the blessed Eulalia's shroud of snow,
And the dove from her martyr lips that flew
With the girlish spirit so white and true?
Ay me, O God, Thou hast called to Thee
Full many a soul as white as she!
Ay, I tolled the bell but yesterday
For such an one in the twilight grey.
Was it yesterday?—I am very old,
And my eyes wax dim, and my blood grows cold,—
Is it forty years? There was snow on the ground,
That lay on my heart as the years rolled round;
But green is the churchyard now below,
And my heart is cold, but not with the snow.—

PANEM QUOTIDIANUM DA NOBIS HODIE.

Is it a bird? Ay, chirp for thy crumbs,
Thou shalt have them, my child, when Tinè comes:

For there's something strange on my heart and brow,
And I cannot get up to serve thee now.

ET REMITTE NOBIS DEBITA NOSTRA.

I do not think I am tolling the bell,
Yet surely I hear it knolling a knell:—
Is it Wolf? No, he never tolled so well!
Ha! old Friend, is it thou?
'Tis kind to come thus to help me now,
For I feel almost too feeble to rise,
And it seems a labour to open my eyes.
Ah, well! You can toll even better than I!
But, who for? I forget, for so many die.
Yet, I thought when they told me, 'twas one I knew,
One near and dear, but I wot not who.

ET LIBERA NOS A MALO. AMEN.

Music is it? 'Tis many a year
Since I heard the requiem sung so clear,—

DONA EIS, DONA EIS ÆTERNAM.

And hark to the organ, how calm and deep!
Seven years I have heard it not, save in sleep.
Oh, hearken! It never seemed so near!
Is it she who singeth so sweet and clear?

SOLVET SÆCLUM IN FAVILLA

TESTE DAVID CUM SIBYLLA?

Oh, to rise and join! If I could but see!
Dear God!—NUNC DIMITTIS, DOMINE!

A SPRING-TIDE WELCOME.

March 10th, 1863.

BID her welcome, O fairest Spring from the South!
She is fair as thyself that greets thee!—
Meet her and kiss her on eyes and mouth,—
The Spring from the North that meets thee!—
Meet her and kiss her, O Spring from the South,
Our bride in her bridal gladness;
With the Crocus, in true-love's saffron sheen,
Bring the Snowdrop's maidenly white between,
For the bride in her bridal gladness:
And scatter the purple Violet,
For a hope that blooms through an old regret,
Sweet, sweet in the hues of sadness!

Bid her welcome, O Violet, under thy leaves,
Sweet, sweet, in thy purple mourning,—
The Hope who comes to the land that grieves
For the Good One unreturning!—
Greet her, O Violet, under thy leaves,
In thy purple mourning greet her!
Tell her that sweet to the heart that bleeds
Is the hidden fragrance of holy deeds,
Yet say there is one thing sweeter;—
For sweet, O sweet though the memory be
Of the Wise and Good in the Land of the Free,
The renewing of Hope is sweeter!

Bid her welcome, O Snowdrop, out on the lea,
Fair, fair in thy maiden whiteness.—
The Maiden who comes from over the sea,
So fair in her maiden brightness!—
Greet her, O Snowdrop, out on the lea,
To thine own sweet self compare her!

Tell her how English pulses bless
The charm of her maidenly loveliness,
Yet say there is one thing fairer;—
For fair, O fair though her form may be,
To the brave true man in the Land of the Free,
Her maiden heart is fairer!

Bid her welcome, O Crocus-cups i' the sun,
Bright, bright in your golden glory.
The Dansker Bride who is wooed and won
To grace our English story!
Greet her, O Crocus-cups i' the sun!
With a golden welcome cheer her!—
Tell her that dear to an Empire's bride
Is the fulness of Empire's pomp and pride,
Yet say there is one thing dearer:—
For dear though the pride of Empire be
To the bride of a Prince in the Land of the Free,
The true True-love is dearer!

GARIBALDI.

April, 1864.

HAPPY be the gales that waft thee, Bark that bearest o'er the sea,
Prophet,—aye and more than prophet of Italia One and Free!—
Welcome, Joseph Garibaldi! With all praise of tongue and pen,
Welcome, welcome with all honour, with all love of all true men;

Garibaldi!—As I name thee, from the backward past of time
Flash the shapes of old-world Manhood,—shapes of old-world Faith sublime;

Awful shadows of thy brethren, gazing on me as I gaze,
Demigods and stately Visions of the dim heroic days.

And I see among the Visions, where in Lemnos isle untrod,
One foot-stricken Philoctetes wields the arrows of a god;
Wastes the weary years in sorrow, while afar the Chiefs of Troy
Laughing proudly on the leaguers, bid them enter and destroy.

And I hear the Prophet whisper: "Hark, Achaians, would ye speed,
Go, fetch hither Philoctetes: he alone can do this deed.
His alone the fateful arrows, tempered in Lernæan gore:—
Let him come, Alcides' comrade, and Troy town shall be no more!"

And I see a false Ulysses, with a hate-dissembling guile,
Urging forth the stricken Hero to the leaguer from his isle,
And the warrior from the meshes of his falsehood bursting free,
To the gods' will grandly yielding, and the Fate, whate'er it be.

And again once more I see him, waxing whole of his deep wound,
Watch the triumph of his arrows, see all Troy a blazing mound;
And beyond the blaze and triumph, and the War-god's glorious ills,
See him girt with peaceful peoples, on the free Calabrian hills!

Thou thrice-nobler Philoctetes! Is thy foot-wound not yet whole?

Solferino's new Ulysses—hath he loved thee to cajole?
Through and through our welcome ringing, o'er a fallen
Troy we hear
The last curses of Mastäi, Antonelli's dying sneer!

SONG.

KISSES, sweet kisses,—sweeter than death :
Beneath and above
Nothing but love,—
Love in the heart and the quick warm breath !

Weeping, wild weeping,—sadder than death :
Above and beneath
Nothing but death,—
Death in the heart and the bridal wreath !

Count me those kisses, sweeter than death
Ah, Sorrow, so few ?
Make up the due !
Count me the tears, too, sadder than deat

A DIRGE FOR SUMMER.

SUMMER dieth :—o'er his bier
Chant a requiem low and clear!—
Chant it for his dying flowers,—
Chant it for his flying hours.
Let them wither all together
Now the world is past the prime
Of the golden olden-time.

Let them die, and dying Summer
Yield his kingdom to the comer
From the islands of the West:
He is weary, let him rest!

And let mellow Autumn's yellow
Fall upon the leafy prime
Of the golden olden-time.

Go, ye days, your deeds are done!
Be yon clouds about the sun
Your imperial winding-sheet!
Let the nightwinds as they fleet
Tell the story of the glory
Of the free great-hearted prime
Of the golden olden-time.

CROCUS-GATHERING.

COME, gather the crocus-cups with me,
And dream of the summer coming:
Saffron and purple and snowy white,
All awake to the first bees humming.

The white is there for the maiden-heart,
And the purple is there for sorrow:
The saffron is there for the true true love,
And they'll all be dead to-morrow.

INSTEAD OF A TRANSLATION FROM BERANGER.

BUTTERFLY-RACING, boys; butterfly-chasing, boys,
Down by the milldam, boys,—off and away!
Hats off, and follow him, fluttering, flickering,
Under the chestnuts and over the hay!

There in the clover now!—Throw your hat over now!
Catch him, and keep him, and home with your prize!
Ha, where's the captive, boys?—Fluttering, flickering,
Far, far away in the blue summer skies!

Fair one, O task me not!—Dear one, O ask me not!
Free let him flutter o'er brook-land and lynn!
What if I caught him you,—what if I brought him you,
Named on a label, and spiked on a pin?

ABSENCE.

FADE, thou twisted briony,
Still upon the white-thorn tree !
Fall, ye berries red and gold !
Fall and blacken in the bracken,
Fade and fall !—The year is old.

Never cometh She to wear
Wreaths of thine among her hair,
While we watch the autumnal gales
Blow the shadows o'er the meadows,
Dimming half the distant dales.

A ROUNDELAY.

COME, sit beneath the hawthorn tree,
And press thy lips to mine:
I have a merry song for thee,
Will cheer thy heart like wine.

O well the bonny heath may smile,
The lark sing clear above:
For we will love a little while,
Though all in vain we love.

And green the leaves should be o'erhead,
The bracken brown beneath:
For O, that thou and I lay dead
Upon the bonny heath!

WHAT THE TRUMPETER SAID.

1855.

At a pot-house bar as I chanced to pass
I saw three men by the flare of the gas:
Soldiers two, with their red-coats gay,
And the third from Chelsea, a pensioner grey,
With three smart hussies as bold as they.
Drunk and swearing and swaggering all,
With their foul songs scaring the quiet Mall,
While the clash of glasses and clink of spurs
Kept time to the roystering quiristers,
And the old man sat and stamped with his stump;
When I heard a trumpeter trumpet a trump:—
"To the wars!—To the wars!
"March, march!

" Quit your petty little tittle-tattle,

" Quit the bottle for the battle,

" And march !

" To the wars, to the wars !

" March, march with a tramp !

" To the wars !

" Up, you toper at your tipple, bottle after bottle at the tap !

" Quit your pretty dirty Betty ! Clap her garter in your cap,

" And march !

" To the trench and the sap !

" To the little victual of the camp !

" To the little liquor of the camp !

" To the breach and the storm !

" To the roaring and the glory of the wars !

" To the rattle and the battle and the scars !"

Trumpeter, trumpet it out !

JOCK O' GLEN MORISTANE.

"COME to your hame, laddie,
Laddie, I'm wearie:
Jock o' Glen Moristane,
Jockie, my dearie!"

"Mither, where's Jockie gane?
Ken ye, my mither?
Gin I tyne Jockie,
I'll ne'er find anither."

"Jock's gane a hawking, lass,
Doun by Loch Lomond:
Jock's no be back to thee,
Lassie, this twa' mond.

"Jockie's no true to ye
Mair than to twenty;
Mithers ye hae but ane,
Wooers by plenty."

"Tell me nae mair, mither,
Mither, I'm wearie:
Jockie's my ain true love,
Jockie's my dearie."

"Jock's i' the well, Lizzie,
Lizzie Mac Taggart!
Speir where your mither gat
Bluid on her shoe-girt?

"Toom is your father's ha',
Jock o' Glen Mor'stane!
Toom is your bridal bed,
Cauld is your hear'stane!

"Cauld is your hand, Jockie,
Doun i' the water:
Caulder the heart that leed
Till her ain dochter!

"Cauld is the wide warld
To hearts that are wearie.
Come to my arms, Jockie,
Jockie, my dearie!"

THE PURITAN MILITANT.

ICHABOD, Ichabod!—Never to rise again.
Godless Prelate and King!
Courage, ye saints of God! Lift up your eyes again!
Lift up your voice and sing!

Chant we, brothers, in chorus
Through the fires of tribulation,
For the Lamb hath gone before us,
Our Guide and strong Salvation!

Our prayers and penance and fasting
And manifold agonies
Are writ in the book everlasting,
And lovely in His eyes!

Pilgrims, footsore and sick
To the New Jerusalem :
Our brows all streaming red with the prick
Of the thorny diadem.

Our bones lie scattered before the pit,
White as a forester's chips,
For a deadly wine and blood with it
Hast thou held, O Lord, to thy servant's lips !

Stretch forth thy hand, thou Righter
Of them that suffer the wrong !
Up, Lord, and smite the smiter !
Avenge us ! The time is long.

Bind their nobles in fetters,
And scourge their kings with steel !
Write on their walls the letters
Of the wrath they are doomed to feel !

Mene, mene, tekel upharsin!

Open thy gates, O king!

Up, Lord, avenge us! Drive with thy cars in!

Smite hip and thigh, that thy saints may sing!

Ichabod, Ichabod!—Never to rise again!

Godless Prelate and King!

Courage, ye saints of God! Lift up your eyes again!

Lift up your voice and sing!

SAFI.

SAFI knelt by the spring with her wonted pitcher at even,
Safi, slender of limb and small as the deer of the Desert,
Safi, daughter of Am, White Rose of the Desert Oasis.
Safi espied far away in the yellow mist of the Desert
Shimmering into a shape, how One rode, thirstily hasting
Tall on a camel aloft to the welcome Fountain of Blessing.
Taller he rode than men, though wayworn, wearily stooping,
Nigher and nigher amain as Safi hid from his presence
Trembling under the palm, as he dropped from his camel to drink there.
Still she stood in the sun, that among the stems of the palm-trees

Westering flooded with flame the sands and the blessed
Oasis.
Still she stood while he drank, stood still as a hyacinth
gathered,
Dreading almost to breathe lest the eye of the Stranger
espy her.
Still she stood while they drank, that strange tall man
and his camel,
Drank and drank yet again of the bubbling Fountain of
Blessing,
Leaping alive from the rock, the life of the palms of the
valley.

"Praise be to Allah!" he cried, "and thou, O Spring of
the Desert,
"Blessed be thou among springs evermore!" and straight
from his finger
Loosing an emerald ring, a talisman flashing with cipher,
Dropped it into the fount: "Be this the thanks of the
Pilgrim!

"So never more, O Spring, shall thy waters fail to the stranger,

"So never more shall drought or the sudden rains defile thee!

"Blessed be thou as the streams of Hiddekel, blessed for ever!"

Safi heard where she stood in her hiding under the palm-tree,

Safi saw as she turned how her shadow fell from her hiding

Full on the tell-tale sward to the dusty foot of the Stranger.

"Beautiful art thou, O shadow!" he murmured, "beautiful also

"She who under the palm hath heard the prayer of the Stranger!—

"Beautiful, slender of limb, lithe, light as the lissom acacia,

"Beautiful, mild as the olive, hereafter haply as fruitful!

"Such an one would I wed,—will wed, by Allah, if only

"Stately she be as the palm,—bride meet for a Son of the Giants,

"Be she as tall as my ear, she shall wed the Son of the Giants!"

Safi heard where she stood in her hiding under the palm-tree,

Safi blushed from her foot to the folds of her maidenly turban,

Safi's blood beat fast with sudden joy and amazement,

Safi's love as a rose to the sunshine opens its petals,

Blossomed glowing and sweet to the sunny word of the Stranger:—

Safi blanched from her foot to the folds of her maidenly turban,

Safi's blood stood still with sudden fear and amazement,

Safi's love, as a rose that feels the simoom of the Desert,

Drooped in her tremulous heart at the parching word of the Stranger,
Tingling hot in her ear,—"if stately, tall as a palm-tree."

"I, what am I?—but a rose, little Rose of the Desert Oasis!"

Tall he strode where she stood in her hiding under the palm-tree,
Shamefast, eyeing the spring, little Rose of the Desert Oasis.
"Peace, O maiden, be with thee!" and "Peace," she answered, "and blessing!"
"Who, then, art thou, and whence, O maiden, Rose of the Desert?"
"Safi, daughter of Am, men call me, O Son of the Giants!"

"Safi, daughter of Am, thou art lithe as the lissom acacia;
"Beautiful, mild as the olive, hereafter haply as fruitful,

"Would thou wert tall as the shadow that pointed thee
out in thy hiding,
"Stately and tall as a palm,—bride meet for a Son of
the Giants!
"Peace be with thee, my child!"—and straightway
turned he and left her!

Safi stood by the spring and wept there,—desolate Safi!
Never Safi had loved till she loved that Son of the
Giants:—
Never Safi had loved till she loved and lost him to-
gether!
Weeping she stood by the Spring: "O Spring, he hath
blest thee for ever!
"Me hath he cursed though I love, though I love him
only and ever!"
Then in the Spring she beheld an unwonted trouble of
waters
Bubble and boil as she gazed, and a Voice spake out of
the fountain:

"Peace be upon thee, O daughter of Am, little Rose of the Desert!

"Safi, thee have I loved since first with thy pitcher at even

"Hither thou camest, and oft have I prayed for a mate for my Safi,

"Oft have I prayed for my Safi a mate of the Sons of the Giants!

"Lo, he hath left me a pledge, thou saw'st, of grateful remembrance,

"Take thou, Safi, his ring—I am paid by gratitude only;

"Mine are the gems of the Deep, and the secret ores of the Desert,

"Mine is the diamond's frost and the costly blaze of the ruby,

"Mine is the Pilgrim's prayer,—be thine the pledge of his blessing!

"Take it,—lo, where it lies!—He loves whoe'er may possess it?

"Take it, and sprinkle anon thy head seven times with my water!

"Ask me no more, but trust!—and peace be upon thee and blessing!"

Safi knelt by the Spring: "Allah bless thee, Fountain of Blessing!"

Safi slipped on her thumb the talisman flashing with cipher:

Safi sprinkled her head seven times with the water of blessing:

Safi slept by the spring the sleep of holy enchantment.

"Where is Safi, my rose,—my Safi, light of my household?

"Never to linger so long she wont by the fountain at even:

"Why doth she linger so long, my Safi, Rose of the Desert?"

Thus mused Am the Sheikh, as he marked a Stranger approaching,
Stranger and camel that paced by the path that leads from the fountain ;
" Peace be with thee, O Stranger ! " and " Peace," he answered, " and blessing ; "
" Enter thy servant's dwelling, and rest thyself and thy camel ! "
" Peace to thy house," he answered, " O Sheikh, and the blessing of Allah ! "
Thus they entered and sat. The bubbling cloud of the hookah
Gratefully fragrant spread with the grateful fragrance of berries.
Mutely they rested awhile, till the old man spoke to the Stranger :
" Saw'st thou a damsel, O Stranger, by yonder wells with a pitcher ? "
" Father," he said, " by the spring did I leave one fair as the morning,

"Beautiful, slender of limb, and lithe as the lissom acacia:

"Is she thy daughter, O Sheikh? Thrice blessed art thou, O father!

"Were she but tall as fair, she were bride for a Son of the Giants!"

"Peace from Allah be on thee, my son!" Then again they were silent,

Silent till holy sleep sealed fast the eyes of the Stranger.

"Peace be upon thee, my son! I go to seek for my Safi."

Safi he found by the well,—his Safi, Rose of the Desert,

Safi, Rose of the Desert, but Safi, tall as a palm tree:—

Safi, no more, as of old, little Rose of the Desert Oasis,

Safi asleep by the well, but grown by a cubit in sleeping.

"Allah be praised, O my child!—my child, His hand is upon thee!

"Beautiful ever thou wert, and lithe as the slender acacia,

"Stately and tall as a palm art thou now,—a bride for the Giants!"

Safi woke from her sleep, the sleep of blessed enchantment,

Safi's eyes as she woke met those of her sire's amazement,

Safi's heart stood still, and the life-blood failed within her.

"Is it a dream?—Allah's will be done. Never dreamed I aforetime

"Dream such as this,—so sweet, so strange!—Nay! Allah forgive me!

"Peace be upon thee, my father!—so strange I forgot to salute thee!"

Kneeling, she kissed his hand. "What is this? What ails thee, my father?

"How is thy shadow grown less! thyself so dwindled before me!—

"Sorcery is it?—Behold, I stoop, yet still thou art smaller!

"Even thy mookleh's crown scarce reaches up to my eyebrow,

"Mine, whom thou wont to call little Rose of the Desert Oasis!

"Am I awake?—Is it thou?—I dreamed of the Sons of the Giants,

"Lo, I awake, and thyself dost seem a child of the Pigmies!

"Praised be Allah!—Ah when will He deign restore thee thy stature?"

"Daughter," said Am the Sheikh, "my Safi's father hath changed not.

"I have not dwindled a hair, thyself hast grown by a cubit!

"Allah hath wrought this change, though as yet its meaning I know not!"

Safi was mute, for she felt in her heart her destiny certain.

Homeward they wended together, perplexed both sire and daughter;

"Whence, my Safi, is this? this amulet flashing with cipher!

"Speak, for haply therein may the mystery's drift be imprisoned!"

"Allah is great!" said Safi, "I stood by the spring with my pitcher:

"Lo, there rode to the spring on his camel a Son of the Giants,

"Drank and drank yet again of the bubbling Fountain of Blessing;

"Dropped this ring by the brim; lo, I seek him now to return it."

Doubtfully on paced Am the Sheikh: "Not far shalt thou seek him,

"Even now in my dwelling he sleeps, this Son of the Giants!"

Safi again was mute, for she felt her destiny certain.

Homeward they wended together, both silent, sire and daughter.

Little to Safi—no more little Rose of the Desert Oasis—
Seemed the familiar stones, the palms and slender acacias ;
Little the roofs and the gates, and little the home of her fathers,
Little the old dear door, where the Pilgrim stood by the threshold,
Cross-armed, bowed in salute : " Peace, peace be upon ye, and blessing ;
" Allah forgive me my sleep ! Thy guest was weary and wayworn—
" This thy daughter, O Sheikh ? Thrice blessed art thou, O Father !
" Beautiful art thou, O maiden, and lithe as the slender acacia,
" Beautiful, mild as the olive, hereafter haply as fruitful !
" Stately and tall as the palm, bride meet for the Son of the Giants ;
" Tall thou art as my ear ; thou shalt wed the Son of the Giants ! "

Safi heard where she stood by the little door of her fathers :

Safi's love, as a rose to the sunshine opens its petals,

Blossomed glowing and sweet to the sunny word of the Pilgrim.

Safi held forth a hand with the amulet flashing with cipher :

"Lo, is the talisman thine? O Pilgrim, read me the cipher!"

Humbly the tall man knelt and kissed the hand of the maiden.

"Allah is great! Be the talisman thine! The Fountain of Blessing

"Gave thee the ring for thyself: thyself shall read me the cipher!

"Allah is great, O Sheikh! Wilt give thy daughter in marriage?

"Safi, no more, as of old, little Rose of the Desert Oasis,

"Safi, Rose of the Desert, but Safi, tall as a palm-tree,

"Safi, slender of limb, but Safi, grown by a cubit,—

"Allah hath sealed her Himself, bride meet for a Son of the Giants!"

"Allah is great," said the Sheikh, "His ways are marvellous ever!

"Allah hath chosen Himself a bridegroom meet for my Safi!

"Be thou the son of my age,—thy household blessed for ever!"

THE OLD TIME AND THE NEW.

I.

A PLEASANT tale of the Rabbins,
Of the mighty days of old,
Delivered by village sexton
As he delved the graveyard mould.

The crazy old Ark was rotting
On the peaks of Ararat,
When Shem and his father Noah
By the rippling Gihon sat.

A kid was roast on the embers,
And they sat them down to sup:

And the first red blood of the vineyards
Blushed in the beechen cup.

The supper was blessed and eaten,
And the wine flowed fast and free,
While the children swam in Gihon,
Or raced on the level lea.

"Father," quoth Shem, deep musing,
"'Twere a pleasant thing, I trow,
"To dwell in a house of marble
"Beneath yon mountain brow;

"Where we and our wives and children
"Might sit for aye at ease,
"Watching the herds and cattle
"On the sunny river-leas.

"Our homeless tents are weary,
"Shifting by down and dell:

"No rest upon the mountain,
"No rest beside the well."

Then spoke the hoary Shipwright,
As he heaved a patient sigh:
"Our fathers are gone before us,
"And we, my son, must die!

"Thine years are scarce three hundred,
"And mine are forty score:
"Yet I ween thou canst not reckon
"On even three hundred more!"

Then Shem was very mournful,
And he wist not what to say:
And his father bore the wine-bowl
And took to the tents his way.

Thought Shem, as he wended after,
With his dark eyes dim with tears:

"What use were a house of marble
"For a poor three hundred years?"

II.

I stood at a Jewish counter,
In the midst of a Christian town,
By the side of a haggard woman
Clad in a tattered gown.

And I know not what memory stirred it
In that mart of blood for gold,
But I thought of that pleasant story
And the yew-tree lives of old.

She spoke to the bearded Hebrew,
And a tear-drop stained her sleeve—
"My husband lies on his death-bed,
"And hath not a day to live.

"He hath sent you back this wallet
"Of work that he had to do;
"And he prays you have pity upon him
"As Christ shall have pity on you."

Then swore the Mammon-prophet,
And he clenched his teeth: "Begone!
"I have paid him well for his labour,
"And it must and shall be done!

"What care I for his croaking?
"It is but a feint to shirk:
"If he have but an hour to live in,
"He still has an hour to work!"

Before that New-Light gospel
Millennial lives grew dim:
I thought of that dying worker,
And Shem was a child to him.

A DREAM ON NEW YEAR'S EVE.

I DREAMED a dream :—Methought two travellers
To an old hostel in a narrow street
Came walking wearily, their way-worn feet
Shod in strange sandals : and the folk said: "Sirs,
"What make ye here to-night?" but on they went
Unheeding, for the winter day was spent,
And sought their chamber. As they lay awake,
The jangling bells clanged forth a sudden peal
Of strangest music, and they seemed to feel
The Old Year die upon the night, and break
The links of Past and Future ; and below
There was a noise of trampling in the snow,

And clamorous angry voices: but they heard
The strife all idly, turned them round and slept,
Slept even in my dream, and something kept
A watch above them that nor spoke nor stirred.
Then one awoke, and started to his feet,
And spoke his fellow: "Christ is in the street!"
And forth they went to meet Him, but they found
The street all empty, save a shivering heap
Of frozen sack-cloth, where one seemed to weep
Stretched by a threshold on the wintry ground.
Then one said: "Speak, O Lord!" and bent him o'er
The moaning outcast. But I dreamed no more.

A STORY OF A STONE.

Two children in a mood forlorn
As childish mood may be,
Walked hand in hand one summer morn
Beside the western sea.

And there upon the sand, alone,
Half-hid, by chance they saw
An oval quaker-coloured stone
Without a seam or flaw.

I know not what of comfort dwelt
Within its sea-worn face,
But something, sure, therein they felt
That seemed to meet their case.

Some household dearness in its look
Beside the weary foam :—
Some love, unwrit in any book,
That bade them bear it home.

And many a year, from time to time,
When brought by chance to day,
A flash from earnest childhood's prime
Around it yet would play.

A flash from earnest childhood's prime
That dimmed the eye with tears,
And smote athwart the passing time
The moods of buried years.

A HOUSEKEEPER'S STORY.

You recollect our keeper, one-armed Dick,
Who took you up for poaching when you came
With young Sir Harry first; and swore he knew
You were no friend of master's, for you wore
A yellow neckerchief,—poor old Sir Harry
Being just defeated for the county :—Well,
He told us all one morning, 'twas the day
Two years exact after the old man's death,
Just about Martlemas, how he had seen
Strange foot-prints in the snow. They came, he said,
Straight from the lower stew-pond to the hall :
A neat, slim boot enough, but somewhat queer
About the ball o' the foot, as if the sole

Were cleft along the middle ; but what made
The thing seem stranger, though he looked and looked
A good half-hour or more, he never found
One print to match it t' other side the pond :
Not one to match it—nothing but blank snow,
With here and there a deer-trail, ploughed and deep,
As if the beasts were startled. Well, that day,
A stranger came among us sure enough,
Though none saw how he came. An evil day
Was that if e'er one dawned upon God's earth.
Not that I'm superstitious, but I think
Sometimes God gives Beelzebub a day,
And that was one, if e'er God does give days.

My lady knew the foreigner, it seemed,
In her own country, a Hungarian Duke
I think they called him, and he stayed and stayed.
And walked and rode, shot, played at billiards, fished,
With poor Sir Harry—sang, too, of a night,
He and my lady, strange outlandish airs,

Such as old Schwartz the courier used to play
On his guitar, with strange outlandish words.
And so he lived among us, lived and seemed
One of the family almost, to those
Who knew no better. We all hated him,
All but my lady's foreign waiting-woman,
And she——Your blood, sir, would have boiled like mine
To see that brazen madam smirk and leer
And mince their jargon on her tigress' lips
Whene'er she met him. Well, all's over now!
And as I said, sir, we all hated him.
Not that he was not civil, for he was,
And free enough with money; but, you know,
Old servants' eyes are watchful! That man's look
Would make you shiver in a July sun.
Wolf that he was! We knew he was a wolf,
And knew no good could come of him. But, sir,
If you'll believe me, that same son of Cain
Was loved by half the county. Lord, they flocked
Like crows to carrion! If that man had bid

Lord Charles and young Sir Sampson lick his boots,
They'd have drawn rapiers which should lick them first!

Well, sir, one afternoon I went upstairs
To see about the linen, and I stood,
So God ordained, one moment at the window
That looks across the courtyard, and I saw
In the north green room, where my lady sate,
Her and that miscreant; talking loud they were,
And angrily, when something that she said
Stung him, as I suppose, and quick as thought,
He unclasped his great knife, and struck her here,
Here in the breast! As I'm a living soul,
I saw him stab her in the breast three times,
I saw him do it! Stab, stab, stab, three times!
"Murder," I shouted, "murder!" And ran round
With Miles, and cook, and Johnson to the room!
There she lay on the floor, a heap of blood,
As dead as marble! He, that fiend, was gone.
Now, mark you, poor Sir Harry at the time

Was walking through the courtyard with his whip,
And that young waiting-woman, with a grin,
Hissed out, "There goes the murderer!" He, poor man,
Came in and found us there quite quietly.
"What's this?" says he. My God, to see him turn
And look down at his wife as she lay there!
"Murderer!" snarled the maid. He stood straight up
"If I have done this deed," he said, "great God!
"Smite me, and stamp me murderer!" Down he fell!
Fell flat down on the carpet, fell down dead!
Dead as his wife beside him. Both stark dead!
Some vessel in the heart, the doctor told
The jurymen, had broken. "Just in time,"
Quoth one, "to baulk the gallows of their due!"
Would you believe it? That young child of hell,
The waiting-woman, and a stranger lad,
Who said he came there begging, swore they saw
Sir Harry kill his wife—Sir Harry himself!
Swore it upon the Book, with when and how!
And I? I might as good have held my peace

As stand there witness of his innocence.
The coroner told me 'twas a shameful thing
At my age to forswear me; bade me pray,
And Heaven knows what more nonsense; and Lord Charles
Backed him in all he said. "This female dotes,"
Says he, "God's judgment brands the guilty brow!
"His vengeance reaches where man's arm falls short!"
And then the parson: "This man prayed to God
"To smite if he were guilty, and God smote!"
So they went on, God help us! and the world
Thinks to this day Sir Harry did the deed,
And quotes his death as one of God's great feats!

Judgment, forsooth! Who taught the world this creed?
Not Christ, I wot! Why, mark you, those eighteen
On whom the tower in Siloam fell,
Were they, too, murderers? Nay, was Christ Himself,
Because God smote Him? For myself, I own,
I think God heard my poor young master's prayer

In quite another fashion; took him hence,
Because He would not smite him! Had he lived,
He had indeed been smitten! Many a time
When folks——but I'm no parson, and young men
Don't heed old women's prate. Well, sir, this Duke,
Devil or Duke,—we searched the country round,
Offered rewards, set bloodhounds on his track,
Hired detectives at two pounds a day—
All to no purpose! Still no tidings came
Of him or any like him. All the hounds
Made for the stew-pond, and we had it dragged,
And dragged again, with nothing for our pains
Except a great swine's carcase, which our Dick
Swore to his dying day was none but he!

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

ONCE the rod of Jesse's stem
Blossomed fair in Bethlehem,
And in ages long ago
God came down to man below.

Angel-lips to shepherds then
Bore the news "Good will to men,"
And a kingly guiding-star
Beckoned Eastern seers from far.

Needs no star nor Angel's word
Now to guide us to our Lord.
Bethlehem lies everywhere!
Seek and find!—The Child is there!

Shepherds, bring not gifts nor gold!
Small the wealth of shepherds' fold:—
Ye from the rich East bring thence
Gold and myrrh and frankincense!

Lo, the Son of David doth
In His love accept ye both;
Blesseth both,—nor heedeth which
Be the poor men or the rich.

Rise and seek, ye Christians, rise!
In the manger still He lies!
Seek and find Him, rich and poor!
Christ is born for evermore!

CAVOUR.

GONE, and thy work not done! Dead, dead, while yet
Yon crazy shaveling clanks his spectral keys
Over Italia's capital, and raves
Of immemorial Empire, aimlessly
From palsied hands spilling the dull dead bolts,
Which once were lightning, o'er unheeding realms!—
Dead, dead, while yet before his Roman sire
The unfledged boy-anarch of St. Elmo kneels,
And whets his venom; after his foul kind
Hatching his dastard treasons,—dreaming still
Of Freedom quivering on Sicilian racks,
And sceptres, gilt once more with martyrs' blood,
Wielded throughout illimitable night

By inexterminable Bourbons!—Dead,
Dead, while Venetia strangles in the net
Four-square of Austrian Kaisers! Dead, while still
Imperial Gaul sits Sphynxlike on the world
And plots her murderous riddles!
O dead, dead!
And none to grasp thy mantle. None, like thee,
Cavour! A narrower wisdom, feebler will
And hand less firm shall weave the tangled threads
Of thy Italia's destiny! Alone,
Alone, Cavour, Italia's slave and lord,
Didst thou control the chaos!
They will come,
Ignoble Pigmies, chattering Myrmidons,
And act their petty antics o'er thy grave,
Thine, who didst dwarf them; apes of statesmanship,
Mocking thy kingly wisdom and broad lore
With their own small ambitions, schemes and feuds,
And boast themselves thy equal! They will come,
The sires of old rebellions, men whose eyes

Grown dim by gazing on their dungeon walls,
Or dark with blinding exile, can discern
No hope of sunrise even in the morn
Of temperate Freedom, babbling, babbling still
Their old Utopian nothings! Birds of night,
Flapping foul wings and shrieking at the day
Because it dawns not Westward! They will come,
The loathsome spawn of Anarchy, the slaves
Of despots, things that battened on the blood
Wrung from Italia's agony,—and they,
The dark, dishallowed priesthood of dead creeds
Who in the vineyards of God's heritage
Trampled the wine-vats, crushing human hearts,
Hopes, passions, aspirations, and thereout
Sucked horrible frenzy, drunkenness of lust,
And uttermost perdition!—They will come
And none shall scare them! Nightmares of the past
Squatting in hideous council on thy tomb.
Thou wilt not heed them! They are nought to thee!
Thou hast gone forth and left them,—them and us!

Ay me, gone, gone for ever! leaving them
To wreak their littlenesses unchastised,
And us, thy friends, thy country, to our tears!—
Tears, tears of bitter anguish, not despair,
Thou dost forbid despair!

Yea, even now
We walk not hopeless! Lives Ricasoli,
Lives Garibaldi, aye, and many a one
No whit less dear to Freedom, men whose souls
Thyself didst kindle with the holiest flame
Of Patriot love! They live, yet mightier far,
Thy name, thy wisdom live,—their beacon-fire,
Their compass, bulwark, oracle, and shield,
To rouse, to guide, to strengthen, teach, protect;—
And more,—the dread Archangels of the world,
God's own first children, who from age to age,
Æon to Æon, with invisible hands
Broaden the bounds of life, and give to men
The wider freedom, grander love, more truth,
More love,—the eternal Destinies are theirs!

We sorrow, but despair not! Soon or late
That fell chimeral spectre of a Faith
Dead but unburied, from the Seven Hills
Whereon he lingers, girt with Gaulish steel,
Flits with the night that shields him!

Even now,
Dying Mastai to the Rome he chokes
Bequeaths a schism whose timely rent shall ope
To welcome Freedom!—Soon or late the hands
Of Hapsburg Kaisers loosen from their grip
The sceptre of old Venice! Soon or late,
Imperial crownals dwindle on the brow
Of bastard Bonapartes! Earth can wait!—
God hinders not, nor hastens!

Not for thee,
O, not for thee, Cavour, this feeble hand
Shall twine the vulgar coronal of Fame!—
Thou didst not toil for glory! In the dreams
That nursed thy boyhood, thy Italia stood
Star-crowned before thee, and in words of fire

Bade thee go forth and conquer! Not for Fame!
The greed, which, hungrier than the greed of gold,
And nobler only in the nobler deeds
That win wherewith to sate it, touched not thee!
Thou didst not lust for praise! Thy lordlier soul
Disdained the crown! Italia, One and Free,
This and not Fame! Italia, One and Free!
This was thy lode-star! This thy life! For this
Didst thou dare all and do all! Yea, for this,
With that wise virtue, which unwiser souls
Knew not as virtue, didst thou deign to sue,
And chaffer with the ravening Arbiter
Who grasped Ausonia's future! Even, for this
Thou couldst endure that friendship should grow cold
With him, that pirate of Sicilian seas
Who won thee half thy Italy! This, this,
Like a rich heirloom to the beggar world,
Thine, even in death,—Italia, One and Free,
Dost thou bequeath us! Yea, she shall be One
And Free, thy monument throughout all time!

RELIGIO POETÆ.

HELP thou, but be not holpen. If need be,
Give men what ware thou hast worth gold, for gold;
And, so thy tale of ware be truly told,
Buy Freedom as thou wilt,—but be thou free!
Here close thy count with man. Save this to thee
Be there no reckoning made of bought and sold,
But live the life God gives thee, and withhold
Thy nobler hand from aught of earthly fee.
Stand four-square to the world for praise or blame:
Deserve, but touch no guerdon. Name and fame,
Titles and useless wealth leave thou to them
Who can be paid thereby. Such be not thou!
True work, true love can spare the laurelled brow:
The great are greatest with no diadem.

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY.

December 24th, 1863.

THOU sleepest! Thou wilt never wake again!
No more for ever among mortal men
That scrutinous eye under the giant brow
Shall rede the riddles of their life. Even now
Thou sleepest well, where bitter indignation
No more can lacerate thy heart!—No more
The babble of misprision, and the sore
Galling of treacherous craft and envious passion
Vex thee, there sleeping
Where greatness breeds not hatred, and thy Fame
Can turn no more to shame
The dwarf ambitions round thy Titan grandeur creeping!

Asleep? Nay, rather, on this Christmas Eve
Dost thou not sup with Shakspere, and receive
Immortal welcome of the Great of old?—
Ah, pitiful dream! The man we loved lies cold,
Cold, very cold and still!
The brave true heart will never beat again:
There dwells no thought within the kingly brain:
All spent the liberal fountains of the will!

O Master, O true Friend! I cannot borrow
The bitter laurels of a fabulous sorrow
To strew thy bier withal! The word I speak
This night is one I must! If all too weak,
Thou wilt forgive me! There be times and moods
That slay the soul with silence. When the floods
Yawn for Arion, he must sing or die!
O well is he, whose numerous verse and high
To his whole thought can then give utterance meet,
And speak the word that saves,—for ever sweet,
Sweet, and for ever strong!

O Thou, if e'er of old, dread Soul of song,
This night speak with me once again! Ere yet
My life slope downward to the suns that set,—
Now, ere the brain wax feeble, and the heart
Unlearn its youthful madness;—ere mine Art
Slip from me like the glory from a cloud,
Leaving me dark, a melancholy shroud
Of dead imaginations; yet once more
Give me this night to soar
Beyond these visible shows which men deem Life,
Thither, where mortal sorrow, pain and strife,
And toil and turmoil seem but as they are,
Mere dreams fast fleeting. Yea, if e'er thy star
I have sought devoutly, if nor lust of Fame,
Nor lust of Gold,—far other, yet the same,—
Have marred the song I brought Thee in old time,
Grant me that this my rhyme,
Though wintry pale the blossoms of my wreath,
And dashed with dews of Death,
Live, not unworthy, on that deathless head!

O Master! O true Friend! what word of mine
Can meetly solve the arrears of glory due?
Can tell how wise thou wert, how brave, how true?
Can speak to after years
The fulness of our love, our loss, our tears?—
I who, unlessoned in the skill divine,
Hear of thy fall, as under a strange shield.
Far in the fameless outskirt of the field,
Namelessly warring, haply young Lavaine
Might hear of Lancelot smitten through the brain
Full in the fore-front of the Table Round!—
O peerless Knight, and flower of chivalry!
No more at trumpet's sound
Thy grasp shall whiten on that mighty hilt,
To cleave the brazen panoply of guilt,
Rescue his victims, set his captives free!—
No more, no more in Knightly brotherhood,
Thy presence cheer us in the Eternal Fight!—
There, where thy greatness stood
A gate of strength, unyielding 'gainst the flood,

Surges even now the ghastly tide-rush in,
Falsehood, and falsehood's kin,
Fair-kirtled foulness, snowy-mantled sin !—

One sunny Sabbath in a sweet September,
Dost thou remember
How fair, far sheening o'er the pleasant wealds
The mellow Autumn on the woods and fields
Of Sidney's Penshurst lay? O Master mine,
Red I aright that silent mood of thine?—
Yea, I too saw them, heard them as they came,—
Sidney, and Sidney's sister, and her son,
And whispered with thee! Came, too, one by one,
Thy starry brethren in immortal fame,
Who, wistful lingering on those awful lawns
Still walk on springtide dawns,
Spenser and Jonson, peaceful Wotton came,
And Shakspere!—Shakspere, for I saw thee bow
Thy hoary wisdom, and upon thy brow
There glowed a light as of ethereal flame:

And musingly thou question'dst: "Is it true
That Shakspere walked indeed with Herbert there?"
Dost thou remember?—In that haunted air
I felt thy kindred with the mightier few;
Ay, and the secret of thy might I knew,—
That strength to bind, and that swift power to loose,
That gave thee lordship over want and use,
To wield unshorn man's high prerogative,
And live the life that Nature bade thee live:
The whole man subject to thy strong control,
To hold the temperate tenor of thy soul,
And even if stung by common blame or praise,
To nurse a strong will in emasculate days,
And through their pedlar pettiness to keep
In thought and deed, a something of the sweep
Of life Elizabethan, and the grand
Old days when there were giants in the land,
Ere the poor pigmies of a conscious time,
Owned the Man less, but styled the Age sublime—
To teach,—whate'er thy motley mood might be,

Even in jest, the Truth that makes men free;
Even in jest, the Love that makes men kin;—
The Faith in noble deeds that deigns no sin.

True Friend and Master!—known, alas, too late!—
What dreams of Art were thine, when first thy youth
Held converse with the Archangels of the South,
Raphael and Michael, and those lesser glories,
Giotto, Orcagna, and their feres, whose stories
Speak, shapeful, deathless on Ausonian walls?—
What dreams! what sheen of gleaming intervals,
As when in paths untrod
Pure eyes catch glimpses of the skirts of God!
And thou, too, wert a Painter? —
Ah, not so!
Yet evermore under the motley show
Of madliest mirthful fancies, clearly yet
Didst thou reveal thy teachings, nor forget
Wholly thine old ambitions!
There, too, there,

Unknown, yet rightful heir
Of Chaucer, listening to Petrarca's tales;
Of Milton, lingering in Sibylline dales;
Of Shelley, chanting Adonäis' dirge;
Of Byron, mourning Shelley, when the surge
Yielded his white limbs to the friendly pyre,
As though earth durst not tomb that child of heavenly fire;—
There, even there, didst thou too learn to fashion
The fire of God that lives in human passion
Into keen arrows of sweet poesy:—
Nor love alone! Thine, too, of old the high
Moods of young Fancy, when in yonder land
Hesperian forth she wanders, and with hand
Unchallenged, plucks of amaranthine trees
The golden glory of the Atlantides!—
Or, day-dream-piloted, the Siren's song
Hears o'er the deep, Sicilian caves among,
While the gods waken, and Parthenope
Forgets her long trance by the Midland sea;

With the old witchery singing her sweet lies
To mariners of forlorn argosies :—
Promise of Love and Empire, and more deep,
Nepenthes and irrefragable sleep !
Thou, thou hast watched her through the caves at eve,
Ruthlessly fair, with eyes that never grieve,
Gliding, the sunset flushing her white breast,
To slay the brooding halcyon on her nest !—
O, when in after days, Ulysses, thou
Versed in all lore of cities and of men,
Didst hear indeed those Siren-songs again,
Fell there no fleeting shadow on thy brow ?
Stirred they no bitter memory with their smiles,
Thelxiope or Lysia, whose sweet wiles
Wrecked every bark save thine that neared their bone-
strewn isles ?

Ulysses ? Ay, whate'er all capitals,
Street, market, minster, palace and hall and cot
Could tell or teach of manners and of men,

Their loves, hates, toils, sports, fasts, and festivals,
Thou in the lidless treasury of thy soul
Didst prodigally hoard, and from thy store
Scattering thy wealth, didst ever garner more!

And, lest thy teaching lacked perfection yet,
Came Misery, dreadful Angel, and Regret
Sate tracing evermore
With hieroglyphs of woe thy hearthstone o'er and o'er!
Ah, Christ! For ever must the Poet's lore
Be perfected e'en thus? O gentle Child,
To those who kneel this night in Bethlehem,
Hast thou no sweeter message?—THOU to them
Wilt thou say calmly: "Go ye forth, and grieve?"
O Mary, mother mild!
I pray thee by thy sevenfold crown of sorrows,
Is this the mystery of thy holy eve?—
Is there no meaning left in our to-morrows?—
Hark! Even now their answer, and again
Comes borne of little voices, high and low,

That wintry nightwinds blow
About the highways with the drizzling rain!

Friend! THOU, too, heardst that answer! In the loss,
And strife, and manifold agony of sore pain,
Thou hadst achieved that wisdom of the Cross,
And made thy griefs thine own, thy brethren's gain!

Was it some effluence of the mood and time,
That seemed even now to lighten through my rhyme?
Alas, that mood is o'er!
I dreamed last night that in a minster old
One wandered with me, and I said, "Come down
Into the Charnel Royal, and behold
The ancient Monarch with his carven crown,
Where he lies stately on his sepulchre!"
And we went down, but lo! the tomb was gone
That I remembered, though the broad flat stone,
Whereon it stood, remained; and underneath
We knew that ancient Monarch slept in death.

And kneeling down among the bones of kings,
And skulls still crowned, and gilt moth-eaten things,
That once were robes of Princes, here and there
With ruby, topaz, emerald glistening still,—
We swept aside into a little hill
The kingly dust from off that marble square,
And read the runes that in clear-chiselled rhyme
Fringed that old Empire's last gray coverlid,
Though all the words of that forgotten time
Were in the tongue that none can understand
Save the dead only :—but the glittering sand,
Full in the centre of the stone, as though
There stirred beneath some living creature hid,
Shook tremblingly, and lo!
We read thy name there, THACKERAY, carven deep,
And knew thee, lying low,
Among thy brethren in that sovran sleep!
Then, through the rounded window, in the green
And sunlit churchyard I beheld the tomb
That I remembered,—from the charnel gloom

Unflawed, forth-lifted into God's free air,
And marvelled that I knew not Thou hadst been
Even of old the crowned One sculptured there.

O Friend !—I dare not see thee as thou art !—
These idle fancies are but as the flow
Of bubbling organ-trebles, clear but low,
At dawn in sleeping nunneries, that grow
Louder and ever louder, till the white
Sisters awake to their old undelight !—
Ay, me !—And I awaken with a start,
To feel thy cold hand pressed against my heart !

A CHRISTMAS DREAM.

I DREAMED a dream, towards Christmas Eve,
Of a people whose God was Make-believe,
And a time nigh come to do more than grieve:

A dream of an old Faith shrunk to a Guess,
And a Christian Church, and Senate, and Press,
Which believed they believed in it more or less.

* * * *

With dazed red eyes, and rime on his beard,
And pinched blue fingers, and toes frost-seared,
Old Father Christmas sat waiting his weird.

Fire was none, and the frozen breath
Fringed the lips with ice o'er his chattering teeth,
As he shook on the Yule log and prayed for Death!

And men said: "Christmas is old and cold,
"Let us make him merry and blithe and bold!
"Let us paint him a fire, and cheer him with gold!"

And the Painter came, and the Carpenter,
And the 'Prentice and Scene-shifter, all astir
With canvas and pasteboard and laths of fir.

And they painted a fire, and hung the scene
With a broidered arras of gold and green,
And holly festoons on the walls between.

And over the dying King below
Swung a pinnacled canopy all aglow
With crockets of golden mistletoe.

And within there dangled all to see
The three gilt pills of the Medici,
Marked Lionel, Meyer, and Antony.

And men said: "Christmas is old and cold;
"We have made him merry, and blithe and bold!
"We have painted a fire, and cheered him with gold!'

And the old King groaned, but he could not speak
For the crust of ice on his palsied cheek;—
But none took heed of a groan so weak.

Then under a Hierarch's coronet
There crawled in one with a fisher's net,
And its eye was ablaze with an awful threat.

With a snaky hiss in an oily sneer,
And a wild-cat's grin in a saintly leer,
It spoke, as it crawled, for all to hear:

" Father," it said, " thou art old and cold,
" We will make thee merry, and blithe and bold!
" We have wrought for thy slumber a couch of Gold!'

And a pye-coat shepherd-crew paced near,
With a coffin of gold on a gilded bier,
And a tissue of gold for funeral-gear.

And they rested each on his golden crook,
And chanted a hymn from a holy book:
But the old King only groaned and shook.

He groaned and shook, but he could not speak
For the crust of ice on his palsied cheek:
They heeded him not, those herdsmen sleek.

But the Hierarch bowed, for a lordlier Chief
Came crowned with lawgiver's strawberry-leaf,
And sceptred with poppy-stalks bound in a sheaf.

Toothless and bald, he had teeth and hair,
Wizened and wrinkled, his cheek was fair,
For the hare's-foot had hidden the crow's-foot there.

"Father," he said, "thou art old and cold!
"To make thee merry, and blithe and bold,
"We have brought thee Myrrh in a box of gold!"

And a rout of Elders in scarlet and fur,
Hobbled goutily in with cackle and stir,
And laid on the coffin a casket of myrrh.

And they carolled a psalm to him, line by line,
How Wisdom is water, but Knowledge wine,
And Childhood earthy, but Dotage divine.

And the old King groaned, but he could not speak,
For the crust of ice on his palsied cheek:
Had he shrieked, they scarce would have heard his shriek.

Then a third Chief came whose wand was a scroll :
"'Tis he," they buzzed, "who hath pawned his soul
"To be rolled in lengths on the printer's roll."

Halt of a foot, but strong was he :
His gait was a serf's, but his eye was free :—
His crown was a broad phylactery.

"Father," he said, "thou art old and cold,—
"We will make thee merry, and blithe and bold,
"With Frankincense in a box of gold!"

And a rabble of motley, none knew whence,
Laid a chest on the bier with the frankincense,
And a scroll of their names who had paid their pence.

And they chanted a carol, some low, some high :
But the burden of all their psalmody
Was "I, I have given, and I, and I!'

And the old King groaned, but he could not speak
For the crust of ice on his palsied cheek;
But they deemed it was only an old man's freak!

And they all strolled forth to their own hearth-side,
And left him alone, for 'twas Christmas-tide;
And the Midnight tolled, and the old King died!

And behold, or ever the tolling ceased,
Three Kings with their companies most and least
Rode amain toward a Star that sailed from the East.

And three from the West, in shepherd array,
Ran East, for an Angel fled that way,
And the wayfarers met where the dead King lay.

"Where is the Child?" they cried, "the Child
"Who is born our King, ere we all be mild?"
And they stared at the corpse, and their eyes waxed wild.

There sat he, an iceberg shaped like a King,
In the midst of his theatre garnishing :—
And they said, "Let us bury this frozen thing !"

And they lit them a fire, and piled it high
With the canvas and pasteboard and carpentry,
And the frankincense that they found thereby.

And they thawed the limbs of that Monarch old,
And spread the myrrh betwixt fold and fold,
As they wrapped him and laid in the coffin of gold.

And lo, as they dirged him a requiem,
There were voices of Angels answering them
With a chant : "He is born in Bethlehem !"

And the rooftree gaped with a sudden gash,
And a blaze of glory, a blinding flash,
Burst in from the sky with a thunder crash !

And I woke :—but I saw how the coffin of gold
Was the manger-cradle of One foretold
Who should right the Wrong and make new the Old.

And one cried, "Gather them, all and some,
"For the Christ is reborn in His Christendom!"
And I heard the voice of a Babe cry, "Come!"

Come, for the Old still breathes in the New!
Come, for the False is lost in the True,
And the Creed may die but the Christ lives through

THE END

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